MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE FANTASTIC FOUR®

VOLUME 15

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 151-163
& GIANT-SIZE Nos. 3-4
ROY THOMAS & RICH BUCKLER
WITH GERRY CONWAY & LEN WEIN

MARVEL

MARVEL MASTERWORKS

PRESENTS

THE Fantastic FOUR

VOLUME 15

COLLECTING

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 151-163

& GIANT-SIZE Nos. 3-4

ROY THOMAS • RICH BUCKLER

WITH GERRY CONWAY & LEN WEIN

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NOS. 151-163 & GIANT-SIZE NOS. 3-4

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INTRODUCTION
BY ROY THOMAS

Why should you, or I, or anyone, have any interest in a comic book like *Fantastic Four* after it's reached its sesquicentennial issue?

I'll tell you why…in a roundabout way.

Since the very beginning with *FF* #1 back in 1961, one of the open secrets of Marvel's success has been…continuity.

Back in the first half of the 1960s, before I was lucky enough to stumble into the comics field, it was continuity, every bit as much as characterization, dynamic art, and offbeat hero concepts, that kept my eyes and mind glued to the little universe that Stan Lee was building with the considerable aid of Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, et al. And I doubt if I was unique in that regard.

By "continuity" I don't just mean that each story was built on what came before, but also the sense of continuity between various Marvel series. The sure and certain knowledge that the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, the Avengers, the X-Men, and the rest all lived and breathed and battled on the same planet, or at least in the same continuum (can't forget about Thor, can we?). The kind of continuity that caused a reader, around 1965, to coin the phrase "Marvel Universe"—a phrase Stan Lee appended for his own, and which also led to other companies suddenly discovering that, "Hey, *we've* got a Universe, too! Welcome to the [Fill in the Name of Company] Universe!" The concept of a shared universe—a company-wide cosmos—changed comics forever.

For a comics "universe" to be taken seriously by readers, it has to take its own past seriously. If huge segments of its history can be wiped away, disowned, simply because a new writer or editor or artist finds past events inconvenient for his/her current storyline, then a reader will feel that *that* creator's yarn, as well, is hardly written in stone and may be erased by the *next* creator. In a world of eternal reboots, a new universe is only as far away as a PC's "delete" button. Who cares what dramatic events happen to characters who'll probably be "redefined" a few months hence anyway?

And *that,* my friends, is a prime reason why I believe that *Fantastic Four* merits your attention, your respect, as it moves, in the *Marvel Masterworks* series, past its 150th issue, and into what was the fourteenth year of its existence.

At the time of *Fantastic Four* #151, only a handful of artists had yet penciled the title: Jack Kirby…John Romita…John Buscema…Rich Buckler…plus a fill-in or two. What the last-named three artists had in common is that all were admirers of what Kirby had wrought in the first 100+ issues and were committed to extending that type of "magical-realism" into the future. Romita and Buckler have both named Jack Kirby as a major influence on their own art…and while Buscema came from a more illustrative tradition, he was nonetheless a fan of Jack's work long before he first drew the Thing.

The writing situation in *FF* was similar: Stan Lee, followed briefly by Archie Goodwin, then myself, then Gerry Conway. Gerry and I were greatly influenced by Stan's writing, while Archie, who'd emerged from a fandom centered around the E.C. Comics of the 1950s, was nonetheless enthusiastic about Stan's approach and worked to emulate it.

But now, as it happened, it was time for a few new pros to try their hands at scripting *Fantastic Four.* The first of these was Marv Wolfman, who'd cut his eyeteeth at DC Comics and Warren Publications, mostly co-writing stories with his good friend and fellow New Yorker Len Wein. As editor-in-chief, I assigned Marv to script the third issue of the quarterly *Giant-Size Fantastic Four,* with a bit of co-plotting by Gerry Conway. Though he was working here with regular penciler Buckler and with inker Joe Sinnott, almost universally regarded as the *FF*'s best embellisher ever, Marv's always maintained he wasn't ready yet to write Marvel's flagship title and did a poor job. I myself think he handled himself quite ably on this first outing. And certainly publisher Stan Lee, who still pored over the mags when he had the chance, never took me to task for giving an *FF* story to Marv. You'll have to decide for yourself. By this time, Marv was making a name for himself writing *Tomb of Dracula* and had a staff job editing Marvel's thick black-and-white comics.

Moving onward to *FF* #151, I believe it amply illustrates my points, a couple of paragraphs back, about continuity of writing and art. The Ben Grimm who snarls at his boulder-like visage in a clothing-store mirror on the splash page is the same Thing who raged against his fate 150 issues earlier. His look, his speech patterns, all reflect that this is the same man-cum-monster who's been trying, ever since, to come to terms with what cosmic rays did to him. And Johnny Storm, straightening his lapels, is basically the same brash youngster whose first exposure to comics readers had been when he burst into flame and Human-Torched a car he was refurbishing. Oh, he's aged a couple of years…but during this time, even Peter Parker had long since graduated from high school.

Gerry Conway and Rich Buckler were playing with toys—meaning characters and concepts—that Stan and Jack had created. But, at the same time, they were manipulating characters others had added to the mix—e.g., Thundra, whom John Buscema and I created a couple of years earlier—*and* the two of them were creating new ones: in this instance, Mahkizmo, the Nuclear Man. After all, the FF couldn't go on fighting Dr. Doom, the Mole Man, and the Skrulls in unending rotation. Every little bit, you have to toss something new into the pot.

The team dynamics need to be freshened from time to time, as well. By now Sue and Reed had had a baby—they'd separated for a while—and first Crystal, then Medusa had taken Sue's place in the group. The number "four" was permanently imbedded in the comic's title, but the actual cast of major characters was a bit larger than that. If Sue or her young son Franklin or Alicia Masters didn't put in an appearance in a particular issue, the reader knew they were around someplace, just beyond the panel borders, doing their own thing and ready to reenter continuity just when you (hopefully) least expected it.

When Gerry departed *FF* after #152, newcomer Tony Isabella stepped in, aware that his job was to make the final chapter of the three-parter flow seamlessly, so that readers had to look at the credits to be sure Gerry (or Stan) hadn't written it. If Tony had tossed in weird plot twists or turns of phrase in what was essentially a fill-in assignment, it would've unbalanced the tale.

Like numerous other relative newcomers to the field, Tony had started out as a fan, writing letters of comment to Marvel and other companies. I'd met him at comics conventions and been favorably impressed by his enthusiasm and intelligence. So when, in 1972, Stan had been looking for someone to do some writing for him—press releases, ad copy, and the like—I had suggested

Tony. Tony had moved from Ohio to New York and was soon up to his typing fingers in all sorts of writing and editorial work around the offices, including for the English reprints and for our black-and-white mags such as *Planet of the Apes* and *Monsters of the Movies*. He quickly became the Marvel equivalent of a utility infielder, *FF* #153 being a mid-1974 case in point. By the next issue, he'd bounced off to the next emergency…but before long he'd become a bigger cog in the Mighty Marvel Machine, developing Hank Pym's assistant Bill Foster into the giant-sized Black Goliath and taking over the scripting of *Ghost Rider*, among other things.

Now, however, it was time for a *fifth* "permanent" writer to take control of *Fantastic Four*... namely, the aforementioned Len Wein. After I'd edged him into gradually writing more for Marvel and less for DC, he had a new staff job as my assistant editor. Probably due to the musical-chairs reshuffling of writers, his assignment on #154 was to scribe a 7-page framing sequence to surround a fill-in reprinting of a Stan Lee/Dick Ayers effort starring the Thing and the Human Torch, which had appeared a few years earlier. (We've only reprinted Len's new pages in this volume; see *Marvel Masterworks: The Human Torch Vol. 2* for the story from *Strange Tales* #127.)

With #155, Len took over the *FF* in earnest, and talked Stan and me into letting him bring in the Silver Surfer and Doc Doom to get his tenure off to an explosive start. (Well, actually, although I'd long since forgotten the fact, *Marvel Masterworks* editor Cory Sedlmeier informs me that the story that saw print as *FF* #155-157 had started out to be *Giant-Size FF* #4, before another story was substituted for it—while the material planned for *GSFF* #5 became *FF* #158-159.)

What's more, in the midst of all the above, Len also took over the writing of *GSFF*. The fourth issue of the latter was probably produced in between issues #155 & 156, but we'd hate to interrupt an ongoing storyline, so in this book it comes *before* the start of the Surfer/Doom saga. By #155, I had departed, as well from the credits. I'd relinquished my editor-in-chief post in favor of being writer/editor of just a handful of comics (most of them about Conan the Barbarian); and Len, after just a few weeks on staff, was suddenly thrust into being editor of all Marvel's color comics, with his buddy Marv handling the black-and-white line. Another rising young talent, Chris Claremont, stepped in to help Len with the FF's encounter in *GSFF* #4 with Madrox, the Multiple Man, who was not destined to become one of the group's more memorable foes, despite the admirable alliteration. SPOILER ALERT: The lads tossed in Professor X at the end of the story. Chris would do further work with the leader of the currently underemployed X-Men at a near-future date.

Len proved, like Gerry, to have the right Stan Lee-echoing touch for the *FF*. He, the eminently capable Rich Buckler, and inker extraordinaire Joe Sinnott were poised to do great things with the World's Greatest Comic Magazine—

Only, because of his promotion, Len reluctantly had to give up that writing assignment. He asked me to take it back, and I was happy to do so with #156, probably just dialoguing a story Len had plotted, which utilized the "Doomsman" robot developed earlier by artist/writer Wally Wood. I then finished the epic in #157. My happiest touch in the latter issue was titling its second chapter "Zugzwang!," a chess term I've always loved. It means "the unfortunate compulsion to move"—when a player must yield an advantageous chess position because he can't skip a move—and I think it rather fit the situation I set up.

With Doc Doom and even Mephisto out of the way, I could finally begin a storyline of my own devising. I brought back Xemnu, a character from those 1960s Human Torch stories in *Strange Tales*...plus the Inhumans. Rich and I got such a kick out of handling these great Lee/Kirby concepts that, at the end of #159, we brought in one more. Namely, we restored Sue Richards to the team, with Medusa remaining in the Great Refuge. It seemed high time the original Fantastic Four started operating as a team again. I kinda suspect a lot of readers felt the same. (More of that "continuity" I was talking about earlier.)

With #160 Rich and I launched the four-part story that concludes this volume—and I was probably glad that, by then, the experiment of an *FF* quarterly on top of the monthly had run its course, so I could concentrate on just the flagship title.

I never needed much of an excuse to bring back Arkon the Magnificent, that sword-and-sorcery sovereign whom I'd written even before I turned my hand to Conan the Cimmerian. Having an alternate-world Reed Richards become a doppelganger for the Thing was a hoot, too. And, since we'd left some plot threads dangling with Xemnu and his Fifth Dimension fanboys a couple of issues earlier, we could wind those up with a bang, as well. I always liked the notion of two of Marvel's many alien races going to war with each other (Kree-Skrull War, anyone?). Probably the most fun I had, though, was having Sue picked up in a taxi by the very same cabbie that had transported her way back in *FF* #1. (Yep, yet another little touch of "continuity.")

The one thing in this four-parter that I look back on with embarrassment is Gaard, the dimensional-war answer to a hockey goalie who gets into a skirmish with the Thing in #163. He was meant to be a good-natured parody of the Black Racer, the skiing embodiment of death (if memory serves a-right) that Jack Kirby had stuck into his DC *New Gods* comic as an echo of a somewhat more inspired creation, the Silver Surfer. But since Gaard was a parody character in the middle of a dead-serious story, I came to feel that I should at least have come up with a better name for him. Oh, well…you can't win 'em all. (And I can already hear it: somewhere out there in comicland, one lonely soul is reading these words and muttering to himself, "But Gaard was my *favorite character ever!*") Well, at least I hope Rich and I surprised a few readers when we revealed, on the penultimate page, the face behind that goalie-mask.

By this point, Rich and I had had a nice little run together on *Fantastic Four,* and as far as we were both concerned, it could've gone on a lot longer. But fate intervened and Rich left the mag (maybe he remembers why—I sure don't), and I inherited as the new *FF* artist a former assistant of his. I forget the guy's name, but he was a virtual beginner. *What* was his name again?

Oh yeah.

George Pérez.

See you next volume?

2013

Roy Thomas, who's been a writer and often editor in the comics field since 1965, and who served as Marvel's editor-in-chief from 1972-74, was just graduating from college when he purchased the first issue of Fantastic Four *for a fast dime, hot off a Missouri newsstand, in the summer of 1961. In fact, he was so impressed by the Kirby cover and by the return of the Human Torch and the rock-like appearance of the Thing that he bought* two *copies of it. He sold the spare one when the price on the open market went up to 50¢. Hey, that's a 500% profit!*

GIANT-SIZE FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

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50¢

68 BIG PAGES

GIANT-SIZE Fantastic Four™

NEW! THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE!

DEATH! WAR! FAMINE! PESTILENCE! THEY STALK THE EARTH ONCE MORE!

BUCKLER + SINNOTT

THE FF BATTLE--FOR THE LIFE OF A WORLD!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

SPECIAL NOTE TO ALL FRIENDS, FANS, AND FELLOW FOOMERS:

YOU ARE LOOKING AT WHAT IS KNOWN IN THE COMIC-MAG BIZ AS A ***SYMBOLIC SPLASH PAGE.*** IT SHOWS THE ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** LYING BROKEN AND DEFEATED ACROSS THE WORLD THEY'VE SWORN TO ***PROTECT,*** WHILE LOOMING OVER THEM IS THE QUARTET OF ***BADDIES*** WHO CAUSED THE WHOLE MAGILLA IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THIS IS CALLED A ***SYMBOLIC*** SPLASH PAGE BECAUSE A SCENE SUCH AS THIS ***OBVIOUSLY*** COULD ***NOT*** HAPPEN. RIGHT?

WRONG!

GERRY CONWAY — *CO-PLOTTER*
MARV WOLFMAN — *SCRIPTER*
RICH BUCKLER & JOE SINNOTT — *ARTISTS*
JOE ROSEN — *LETTERER*
STAN G. — *COLORIST*
ROY THOMAS — *EDITOR*

WHERE LURKS DEATH...

LISTEN TO THEM!

EVEN *THROUGH* THE AIRLESS VACUUM OF *SPACE* YOU CAN HEAR THEM RIDING... RIDING... RIDING...

...*RETURNING* TO THE SPIRALING NEBULAE MEN CALL THE *MILKY WAY*... *RETURNING* TO THE STAR-CHILD CALLED *SOL*, FROM WHICH THEY'D BEEN *EXILED* SO MANY MILLIONS OF MILLENNIA BEFORE... *RETURNING* TO THE PLANET EARTH WHICH ONCE THEY *TROD*, THEN ABANDONED AS A PRIMITIVE, STRUGGLING *DUSTBALL*.

YES, *LISTEN*... LISTEN TO THE SOUL-SHATTERING *CLARION CALL* OF--

--THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE!!

LOOK AT THEM!

THEY HAVE LIVED MORE *EONS* THAN COUNTLESS STAR-SYSTEMS HAVE EXISTED, AND THROUGHOUT THAT INFINITE *ETERNITY* THEY HAVE BATTLED FOR *LIVES*... FOR *SOULS*... FOR *POWERS* IN FAR-STRETCHING *GALAXIES* THAT EVEN *GODS* NEVER TRAVERSED.

...RIDE THE FOUR HORSEMEN!

"HOW *LITTLE* THESE EARTH-PEOPLE HAVE CHANGED THESE CENTURIES PAST," SAYS *WAR*.

FAMINE AGREES. "THEY HAVE LEARNED *SCIENCE*, BUT THAT IS TO BE EXPECTED OF *ANY* PRIMITIVE CULTURE. YET *LOOK*, AND YOU CAN STILL SEE THE *FEAR* LURKING IN THEIR HEARTS ...THE *HATE* STILL COURSING THROUGH THEIR VEINS.

"AGREED, BROTHERS," ADDS *PESTILENCE*. "IN TRUTH THEY ARE NO MORE THAN THE *BARBARIANS* THEY WERE WHEN *LAST* WE LEFT THEM.

"BUT *THIS* TIME THERE SHALL BE NO *CATACLYSM* ...NO *SAVIOR* TO PREVENT OUR *MASTER PLAN* FROM REACHING ITS CONCLUSION.

"IT SHALL TAKE BUT *TWO SUN-CYCLES* TO ACHIEVE TOTAL PLANET CONTROL," *PESTILENCE* SMIRKS, "THEREFORE, IF IT IS *ACCEPTABLE*, I WILL *UNLEASH THE COMA-POX!*"

THE *FOURTH* HORSEMAN SMILES DISDAINFULLY, NODS HIS ACCEPTANCE, AND IN AN *INSTANT*, MANKIND *FALLS*...

...TO *SLEEP!*

BUT A SLEEP WHERE *NIGHTMARES* LIVE AND *GROW*. A SLEEP IN WHICH EVERY TURN IN LIFE'S MAZE LEADS TO *DEATH*.

IT IS *NOT* A PLEASANT SLEEP. BUT THEN, IT IS NOT *MEANT* TO BE.

CHAPTER 1 ONE

...THERE SHALL COME

PESTILENCE

48 HOURS LATER...

YOU WERE *RIGHT*, REED. WHAT YOU FEARED IS *TRUE!*

FOR *MILES* AROUND PEOPLE ARE STAGGERING IN *PAIN.*

THEN EVERYONE *WAS* AFFECTED BY THE SAME *SICKNESS* THAT STRUCK US--

--AND JUDGING FROM THESE POOR PEOPLE HERE, IT IS ONLY OUR *UNIQUE* BODY CHEMISTRIES THAT HELPED BRING US TO CONSCIOUSNESS SO QUICKLY.

NO PARKING

THAT I CAN SEE, STRETCH. NOW HOWZABOUT TELLIN' US WHA' HOPPENED?

AN' SEE IF YA CAN KEEP IT DOWN TA *FOUR-SYLLABLE* WORDS THIS TIME, WILLYA?

I DON'T THINK MY EVER-LOVIN' *BRAIN'LL* BE ABLE TA TAKE WHAT I *THINK* YER GONNA SAY.

REED, JOHNNY, BEN GRIMM-- OVER HERE. *LOOK!*

KEE-RIPES! RATS ATTACKIN' SOME HELPLESS KID!

NO TIME TO FIGHT 'EM ALL OFF.

REED! HURRY-- BEFORE THOSE RATS...

I'M ALREADY AHEAD OF YOU, JOHNNY.

THANKS, BROTHER-IN-LAW. BUT NOW THE SIXTY-FOUR DOLLAR QUESTION IS, "WHERE THE BLAZES DID THEY COME FROM?"

BLAMED IF I KNOW, TORCHIE-- BUT I GOT ME A HUNCH THEY WUZ ONLY THE WARM-UP--

--'CAUSE, UNLESS MY BABY-BLUES ARE GOIN' ON THE BLINK, WE'RE BEIN' INVADED BY CREEPS WHO MAKE THE HULK LOOK LIKE ROBERT REDFORD.

SHEESH! WOULDN'T YA KNOW IT? WE'RE SENT TO DREAMLAND BY WHO KNOWS WHO--

--WAKE UP TA FIND HALF'A CIVILIZATION STAGGERIN' AROUND WITH A HANGOVER YA WOULDN'T WISH ON A YANCY STREETER...

...AND THEN WIND UP BEIN' ATTACKED BY A PACK O' REJECTS FROM "THE PLANET OF THE APES!"*

KIND'A MAKES YA WONDER IF IT WUZ WORTH GETTIN' OUTTA BED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

BEN-- BEHIND YOU. WATCH OUT!

THANKS FER THE WARNIN', RED--

*THOUGH THIS IS NOT A PLUG FOR MARVEL'S LATEST AND GREATEST $1.00-SIZED MAG, YOU CAN TAKE IT THAT WAY IF YOU WISH. --ROY.

--BUT THESE MONKEYS WUZN'T PLANNIN' ON BEIN' MY *SPARRIN' PARTNERS* FEREVER, OR WUZ YA?

SPLAMM!

HEY, YER NOT *ANSWERIN'* ME. *QUIET* TYPES, HUH?

BLATCHHH!

WELL, AT LEAST THAT'S A RELIEF FROM THE *USUAL* MISH-MOSH OF *BADDIES* WE RUN ACROSS.

BUT Y'KNOW YER GONNA HAFTA *TURN IN* YER "SUPER-VILLAINS' UNION-CARD" IF YA DON'T SAY *SUMTHIN'* SOON--

--RUNNIN' OFF AT THE *MOUTH* IS ONE'A THEIR *PRIME REGULATIONS!*

ENOUGH! THIS BATTLE SHALL CEASE IMMEDIATELY!

HUNH? BUT I AIN'T EVEN SAID "IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME," YET.

QUIET, BEN. WE'RE ABOUT TO MEET THE MAN *BEHIND* ALL THIS MADNESS.

*PERCEPTIVE, HUMAN. I **AM** RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS GLORIOUS MADNESS...*

...AS I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT HAS BEFALLEN YOU THESE TWO DAYS PAST.

THEN *YOU'RE* THE CLOWN WE'VE GOT TO SETTLE THIS SCORE WITH!

C'MON, MEDUSA-- LET'S *SEE* WHAT THIS MADMAN *LOOKS* LIKE CLOSE UP.

NO, JOHNNY...

WAIT, JOHNNY! LET HIM *SPEAK!*

YA NEVER KNOW WHUT COULD BE *BOTHERIN'* A KID LIKE THAT, STRETCHO--

WE DON'T EVEN KNOW THE *EXTENT* OF HIS POWERS, YET.

THE YOUNG FOOL-- HE'S *NOT THINKING...* YOU JUST CAN'T RUSH INTO BATTLE WITHOUT SOME SORT OF *PLAN!*

--MEBBE HE'S PININ' OVER LOSIN' *CRYSTAL*?*

MEBBE HE *DION'T* TAKE IT AS GOOD AS WE ALL *THOUGHT.*

**F.F.* *150.-- ROY.*

BUT YA **GOTTA** SAY ONE THING FER 'IM-- HE'S GOT **SPUNK**. 'COURSE, I **HATE** SPUNK, BUT WHAT THE HEY, RIGHT?

BLAST! WHY COULDN'T HE JUST **FORGET** HIS OWN PROBLEMS WHILE WE'RE IN ACTION?

DID YA DO THAT WITH **SUSIE**, STRETCHO?

OKAY, FRIEND-- YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.

FORTUNATELY SUE'S **STILL** RESTING AT BOB AND CAROL LINDERS' RANCH IN PENNSYLVANIA--

-- WHICH MEANS SHE'LL BE **SAFE**--

FOOLS! THERE IS NO SAFETY ANYWHERE! THERE IS NO PLACE MY POWER CANNOT REACH... CANNOT CONTROL... CANNOT DESTROY!

THIS WORLD IS MINE! YOU EXIST MERELY TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF PESTILENCE-- THE POWER SUPREME!

YOU WILL SUFFER MY EVERY WHIM... FULFILL MY EVERY DEMAND!

NOW, BOW BEFORE ME, YOU PITIFUL CREATURES...PAY HOMAGE TO YOUR NEW LORD AND MASTER!

MISTER, YER AS NUTTY AS A MONTH-OLD **FRUITCAKE!**

WHAT IS IT WITH THIS EVERLOVIN' **MUDBALL** THAT ALL YOU **CREEPS** WANT TA **RULE** IT?

ENOUGH RANTING, INSECT! CEASE AT ONCE AND BOW BEFORE ME, OR PREPARE TO PERISH!

SORRY TO **DISAPPOINT** YA, WINGS, BUT THE THING DON'T BOW TA NO MAN--

--'SPECIALLY NOT TA SOME **HALF-MASKED MANIAC!**

KEEP CALM, BEN. WE'D BEST **LISTEN** TO WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

WELL, IT **BETTER** BE GOOD, STRETCHO. IT BETTER BE **REAL** GOOD!

IT SHALL BE GOOD, HUMAN WORM--!

BUT BEFORE I SPEAK--BEFORE I REVEL IN THE HUMBLING OF THIS WORLD--

--YOU SHALL SEE YOUR ENEMY AS HE TRULY IS!

WITNESS CARNAGE UNLEASHED, FOOLS-- GAZE UPON THE LIVING HELL THAT IS--

--PESTILENCE...

...AND THEN KNOW WHY YOUR RACE OF INSECTS SHALL PERISH BEFORE THE MIGHT OF THE HORSEMEN!

I AM ONE OF FOUR--AND EACH OF US POSSESSES POWER ENOUGH TO REND GALAXIES--LET ALONE THIS SCUM-SATED WORLD.

FOR EONS BEFORE YOUR RACE BREATHED IN ITS FIRST GLIMMERS OF INTELLIGENCE... WHILE STILL YOU WERE MINDLESS PRIMITIVES, MY PEOPLE TOOK THIS WORLD AS OURS!

IT IS THE GREATEST COSMIC JOKE OF THEM ALL, THAT THIS POINTLESS PLANET YOU CALL EARTH IS THE NEXUS-- THE CELESTIAL CENTER OF THE CIRCLE OF CIVILIZED WORLDS.

FOR MY PEOPLE TO CONQUER THOSE OTHER PLANETS, THIS EARTH HAD TO FALL FIRST.

MY COMRADES--MY FELLOW HORSEMEN-- WE, THE SOLDIERS-ELITE OF MY WORLD, CAME HERE--AND TOOK IT AS OURS--

--AND WITH THE POWER OF GODS ETERNAL, WE HELD IT AGAINST ALL OUR ALIEN FOES.

"UNTIL THERE CAME TO THIS EARTH A RACE EVEN MIGHTIER THAN OUR OWN--

"--AND, ONLY AFTER A CENTURY-LONG BATTLE DID THEY HUMBLE US AND BANISH US LIKE WHIPPED DOGS... AND WE RETURNED HOME TO OUR MOTHER-WORLD.

"STILL ENRAGED OVER OUR DEFEAT, WE ARRIVED HOME, ONLY TO BE BRANDED COWARDS--TRAITORS... AND THEN EXILED TO WANDER THE UNIVERSE FOR ETERNITY.

"DURING OUR EXILES WE SAW MANY WONDERS. WE WITNESSED WORLDS NEWLY BORN--

"--AND WORLDS SOON TO PERISH BY THEIR OWN MISUSE OF POWER.

"BUT STILL WE SEETHED WITH HATRED AT OUR FORCED EXILE, AND MORE--

Pain!

"--AT THE WORTHLESS WORLD THAT CAUSED OUR DOWNFALL!

"THUS, AT LAST, AFTER ALL THESE ENDLESS EONS, WE HAVE RETURNED--"

"--RETURNED TO ONCE AGAIN WREST CONTROL OF THIS WORLD--TO PROVE TO OUR PEOPLE THAT WE WERE NOT COWARDS...THAT WE WERE NOT TRAITORS!

OUR PEOPLE STILL LONG FOR UNIVERSAL CONTROL--THEY STILL HUNGER FOR CONQUEST...

...AND WITH OUR VICTORY HERE, WE SHALL OPEN THE PATH BEFORE THEM--

--WITH THE FOUR HORSEMEN RIDING TRIUMPHANTLY IN THE VANGUARD!

STICK IT IN YER ***EAR***, MEATBALL--

--'CAUSE WHEN THE ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** GET DONE WITH YA, YER BLAMED HORSES'LL ONLY BE GOOD FER ***GLUE!***

WHAT? YOU DARE ATTACK ME, BARBARIAN--?

OH, PERDON ME, HANDSOME--I DIDN'T *KNOW* I NEEDED AN *INVITE* TA START THE FIGHTIN'!

GUESS US *BARBARIANS* JUST DON'T KNOW THE PROPER RULES'A *ETTI-KUTT!*

SO IN CASE YA DIDN'T QUITE *UNDERSTAND* ME, SMILEY--THIS IS *WAR!*

WAR? THIS IS HARDLY SO MUNDANE A THING AS WAR.

A WAR IS FOUGHT BETWEEN EQUALS--WHILE YOU ARE A SIMPERING FOOL--

--TOO FAR BENEATH ME EVEN TO ELICIT THE USE OF MY FULL POWER!

THIS SHALL BE SLAUGHTER, INSECT--SIMPLE SLAUGHTER!

YEAH? AN' YER MOTHER'S GOT *BAD BREATH*, TOO!

YOUR ATTEMPTS AT INSULTS ARE LUDICROUS, FLEA!

AS LUDICROUS AS YOUR DEATH SHALL BE. OBSERVE--

FER THE LUVVA PETE--

--I'M GETTIN' *WEAK!*

I AM NOT CALLED PESTILENCE FOR NAUGHT, BUFFOON!

WITH EACH STEP FORWARD YOU TAKE, YOUR BODY SHALL GROW WEAKER WITH DISEASE--

--UNTIL YOU CAN STAND UP NO LONGER--UNTIL YOUR INFERIOR BODY CRUMBLES FROM WITHIN ITSELF!

DON'T TAKE ANY *BETS* ON IT, RAT-FACE--

--'CAUSE I'VE FOUGHT *DOZENS'A* CREEPS LIKE YA BEFORE--EACH SPROUTIN' HOW THEY WERE THE BLAMED *KING'A THE HILL!*

AN' MISTER, I'VE TANGLED WITH *WEIRDOS* THAT MAKE YA LOOK LIKE ONE'A *OZZIE'S GIRLS!*

I'VE BEEN *BRUISED*, *BEATEN*, AND HAD MY BRAINS *BASHED IN* BY THE BIG BOYS--

--HECK, I'VE EVEN BEEN *RIPPED APART!*

AN' YA *KNOW* SUMTHIN', BOZO--I'VE COME BACK--

--Y'HEAR ME, YA SLIMY, SKULKING SICK-WARD--

--I'VE COME BACK!

NO! IT MUSTN'T BE--!

NO ONE HAS EVER SURVIVED THE FATAL GRASP OF PESTILENCE BEFORE-- NO ONE!

WELL, WINGS, I GUESS YER LOSIN' YER *TOUCH!*

KAARR-RAMM!

BUT YA KNOW *WHAT,* BUNKY--?

THE THING *AIN'T!*

PWIFF!

HEY! THAT AIN'T FAIR--HE'S *DISAPPEARED!*

REED-- HE'S *GONE*-- WITHOUT A TRACE...

HOW?

WHO GIVES AN *OWL'S HOOT* HOW, REED--

--I HAD 'IM IN MY HANDS AN' HE'S *GONE*--

--WHICH MEANS I GOTTA *PULVERIZE* 'IM WHEN I FIND TH' *CREEP!*

YOU'RE WRONG, BEN-- *DREADFULLY* WRONG!

HE DIDN'T **JUST** VANISH, BEN. I'M **SURE** OF THAT.

WELL, HE'S **GONE**, STRETCHO --AN' EITHER HE SCRAMMED INTA HIDIN'--

--OR HE'S OUT THERE PLOTTIN' HIS **NEXT** ATTACK.

THERE'S A **THIRD** ALTERNATIVE, BEN. YOU **BEAT** HIM.

JUST LIKE THAT? AWW, C'MON, STRETCH--MY LITTLE **SMACKEROONIE** WOULDN'TA FLATTENED THAT FROG-FACED FREAK.

THE POWER **BEHIND** YOUR PUNCH HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH IT, BEN--BECAUSE, UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, IT WAS YOUR **RESISTANCE** TO HIS **PLAGUE-TOUCH** THAT CAUSED HIM TO DISAPPEAR.

CONSIDER THAT PESTILENCE WAS A **DISEASE**. GRANTED, AN INTELLIGENT BEING --BUT **STILL** A DISEASE.

HE **INFECTED** YOU, AND YOU **RESISTED** ...YOU FOUGHT BACK AGAINST HIS **GERM POWER**. IN EFFECT, YOU BECAME A LIVING, BREATHING **ANTIBODY**--

MIND RUNNIN' THAT ONE **THROUGH** AGAIN, HIGH-POCKETS? MEBBE IT'LL MAKE MORE **SENSE** THE SECOND TIME--

--THOUGH SOMEHOW I **DOUBT** IT.

--ONE THAT HE COULD NOT **SUBDUE** OR CONTROL. ERGO, HE **VANISHED**.

NO TIME FOR THAT **NOW**, BEN--NOT WHILE HIS THREE **PARTNERS** ARE STILL LOOSE.

WE'VE GOT TO **FIND** THEM, AND STOP THEM BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

JOHNNY AND I WILL TRAVEL **TOGETHER**.

Y'SURE THAT'S SMART, RED? Y'MIGHT BE NEEDIN' THE THING'S **STRENGTH**.

WE WILL **MANAGE**. CORRECT, JOHNNY?

HUNH? YEAH...**SURE**, MEDUSA. **SURE!**

THEN SIT BACK AND LET THE ALREADY **PROGRAMMED** COMPUTER FLY YOU TO YOUR **FOE**--WHILE BEN AND I FIND OURS.

AFTERWARDS, WE'LL COMBINE OUR FORCES TO TAKE ON THE **FOURTH HORSEMAN**.

YA SURE CAN RUN OFFA THE **MOUTH**, STRETCHO.

IF YA DIDN'T TALK SO BLAMED MUCH, WE'DA BEEN HALF WAY THERE AN' **BACK** AWREADY.

DON'T WORRY, BEN--THERE'LL BE TIME ENOUGH FOR **FIGHTING**--

--AND **DYING**, IF WE AREN'T IN **TOTAL CONTROL** OF THIS BATTLE.

BECAUSE, IF WHAT I **FEAR** IS **TRUE**--THE **FOURTH HORSEMAN** MAY BE **UNDEFEATABLE** ...TOTALLY **UNDEFEATABLE!**

YA SURE YA WUZN'T A **CHEERLEADER** BACK IN COLLEGE, STRETCHO?

SHEESH!

CHAPTER 2 TWO

...AND WAR SHALL TAKE THE LAND!

AFRICA: ONCE IT WAS CALLED THE *DARK CONTINENT!* ONCE IT WAS RULED BY A HANDFUL OF *FOREIGN OPPRESSORS* WHO HELD SWAY OVER THE MULTITUDE OF *BLACKS* LIVING AND SWEATING IN THIS LAND OF THEIR *BIRTH!*

NO MORE!

THE DAYS OF *SUBJUGATION* ARE OVER. THE DAYS OF SUPPOSED "INFERIORS" OBEYING THE MINDLESS LAWS OF THEIR EQUALLY MINDLESS MASTERS ARE FINISHED.

FIGHTING BELOW US, JOHNNY--CAN THIS MEAN *WAR* HAS ALREADY BEGUN HIS *INSANITY*?

AFRICA: A STUDY OF A CONTINENT IN *TURMOIL!*

IT'S *HARD* TO TELL THESE DAYS, MEDUSA--

--BUT *ONE THING'S* FOR CERTAIN...

...THOSE GUYS ARE PLAYING FOR *KEEPS!*

SOMEONE'S EQUIPPED *BOTH* SIDES EQUALLY--

--AS IF HE DOESN'T WANT *EITHER* SIDE TO WIN UNTIL THEY'VE ANNIHILATED EACH OTHER.

JOHNNY! YOU'RE FLYING *TOO LOW!*

TURN-- QUICKLY! YOU'RE IN THEIR LINE OF--

"--FIRE!"

THANKS FOR THE *WARNING*, MEDUSA-- THOUGH I WISH IT HAD COME A FEW SECONDS SOONER.

BUT I GUESS I SHOULDN'T BE COMPLAINING *TOO MUCH*--WE *DID* SURVIVE--

--EVEN IF REED'S MILLION-DOLLAR *PNEUMO-JET* DIDN'T!

JOHNNY--?

DON'T YOU *WORRY*, PRETTY LADY, I'VE GOT YOU.

YOU DON'T *REALLY* BELIEVE I'D LET THE FIGHTING *FIFTH* MEMBER OF THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* MAKE A TOTAL *SPLASH* OF HERSELF, DO YOU?

CAREFUL, JOHNNY--THOSE SOLDIERS HAVE *GUNS!*

GUNS DESIGNED TO TAKE CARE OF EVEN *YOU*, WOMAN.

WE WERE *PREPARED* FOR YOUR INTERFERENCE BY THE ONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF *WAR.*

THEN HE *WAS* THE ONE *RESPONSIBLE* FOR BEGINNING THIS IDIOCY!

WELL, HE'S *NOT* GOING TO *END* IT!

FLAME ON!

PRIVATE! THE *FOAM-HOSE! QUICKLY!*

NOW! BEFORE HE CAN ATTACK!

FWISSHH!

YES, CAPTAIN!

YOU MAY HAVE *STOPPED* THE HUMAN TORCH WITH YOUR *FIRE HOSE*--BUT CAN YOU STOP AN *INHUMAN WITH LIVING HAIR*--?

AN INHUMAN WHO CAN CONTROL HER EVERY *FOLLICLE*... HER EVERY STRAND?

SGT! YOU HAVE YOUR *ORDERS!*

STAND BACK, WOMAN, OR THIS *FLAME THROWER* WILL *BURN* THAT LIVING HAIR OF YOURS TO *SUDDEN ASHES!*

SO, YOUR MASTER FORESAW *ALL* SITUATIONS, DID HE?

AND *MORE*, WOMAN -- FAR MORE!

HE PROMISED US *VICTORY* OVER OUR FORMER MASTERS IN RETURN FOR OUR *BLIND OBEDIENCE* FOR SEVENTY-SIX HOURS.

HE'S PLAYING YOU FOR A *FOOL*. DON'T YOU *SEE* THAT?

I SEE A *DESPERATE* YOUTH AND HIS WOMAN COMPANION *GROPING* FOR SOME WAY *OUT* OF A DEADLY PREDICAMENT!

SUCH HAVE THE WAYS OF WAR *ALWAYS* BEEN... AND WILL BE, ALAS.

WAR DOES NOT PLAY *US* FOR FOOLS--HE USES US AS *WE* USE HIM. WE BOTH HAVE *ENDS* TO REACH-- AND NEED EACH OTHER TO *FIND* THEM.

HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK HE'LL *NEED* YOU ONCE HIS END IS REACHED, MISTER--?

OR MAYBE YOU DIDN'T KNOW-- HE WANTS *CONTROL* OF THIS WORLD! *TOTAL ABSOLUTE CONTROL!*

AND *SOMEHOW* I DON'T SEE HOW *YOU* FIT INTO HIS PLANS.

QUIET! I WILL LISTEN TO YOU NO MORE!

HE *SAID* YOU WOULD SEEK TO *CONFUSE* ME--BUT YOUR PLAN SHALL *NOT* WORK.

FOR, WHEN I COUNT *THREE*, MY ARTILLERY MEN SHALL MAKE SURE YOU WILL *NEVER* CONFUSE *ANYONE* AGAIN.

ONE--TWO--

FASTER, RED--I FEEL YOUR *HAIR* LOOSENING MY ROPES, BUT YOU'RE TOO SLOW... MUCH TOO SLOW.

I'M MOVING AS *QUICKLY* AS I CAN, JOHNNY.

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--THREE!

SORRY, CHARLIE-- BUT IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN A *NASTY GROWL* AND A *RING* THROUGH YOUR EAR TO MAKE A *PRISONER* OF THE *HUMAN TORCH!*

MOVE IT, MEDUSA-- MY *FLAMES* WILL FREE YOU, TOO!

THE FOAM HOSE, FOOLS! USE IT-- *NOW!*

SORRY, SOLDIER-- BUT YOUR *TRICK* WILL WORK *ONCE*--

WHAT?!?

--AND *ONLY ONCE!*

KRAAMPPP!

ATTAGIRL, PRETTY LADY--

--THAT'S ***SEVENTY-SIX*** DOWN AND ONE BIG ***NUT*** TO GO.

AND SPEAK OF THE ***SCREWBALL*** HIMSELF, I THINK WE'VE HIT ***PAYDIRT!*** LOOK!

DON'T MOVE IN TOO CLOSE, JOHNNY. ***LISTEN*** TO WHAT HE HAS TO SAY FIRST.

YOU KNOW SOMETHING, MEDUSA--? YOU'RE STARTING TO SOUND JUST LIKE ***REED.***

HUMANS! LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF WAR!

YOU HAVE WANDERED FAR FROM YOUR RANKS... YOU HAVE LEFT THE SAFETY OF YOUR CAMP--

--AND YOU HAVE BLUNDERED INTO MY PRIVATE WAR-ZONE!

YOU ARE MINE NOW, HUMANS--MINE TO SLAY UPON THIS BATTLEFIELD EARTH!

I SALUTE YOU, MY ENEMIES--

--BEFORE I GRANT YOU YOUR MERCIFULLY SWIFT DEATHS!

FOOOSH!

OOOHHHHHH!

SHE'S ***UNCONSCIOUS!*** BUT IF YOU'VE DONE ANYTHING TO ***SERIOUSLY*** HURT HER--

THIS IS WAR, STRIPLING! IN WAR THERE ARE CASUALTIES!

THE FEMALE FELL FIRST... BUT NOW IT SHALL BE YOUR TURN!

YOU'VE JUST SAID THE ***SECRET WORD***, MAC--

-- I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU WERE SOME HALF-BAKED ***CLOWN*** OR A TOTAL ***PSYCHO*** PLAYING ON THE GREED AND TEMPERS OF THOSE POOR ***PEOPLE*** BACK IN THE VILLAGE...

...BUT, MISTER-- WHEN YOU TAKE ON THE FANTASTIC FOUR, YOU TAKE ON MORE THAN YOU CAN ***HANDLE.***

YOU WERE ***RIGHT*** THE FIRST TIME HORN-HEAD 'CAUSE FROM THIS MOMENT ON, THIS IS--

"WAR!

WAR: NEITHER SIDE CAN EVER HOPE TO WIN IN WAR--THERE ARE NO RIGHTS...NO WRONGS...ONLY SENSELESS SLAUGHTER ...AND ALL FOR THE SAKE OF SOME WORTH-LESS PRIZE.

WAR: SOME FIGHT IT FOR PRIDE! OTHERS FOR LAND...OR FOR POWER!

FWAAHHHH!

WAR: THE VICTOR BASKS IN ITS GLORY UNTIL HIS PRIZE IS PLUCKED BY SOME MIGHTIER HAND.

WAR: IT GOES ON, AND ON, AND ON... AND ALL THE PITY FOR IT.

OKAY, MISTER--YOU'VE HAD YOUR ROTTEN LITTLE BIT OF FUN--

YOU'VE SHOWN US HOW YOU CAN TWIST MAN'S GREED FOR YOUR OWN LOUSY PURPOSES.

NOW LET'S SEE YOU SQUIRM FOR YOUR OWN LIFE.

YOU ARE TRULY THE FOOL, HUMAN--

HOW CAN YOU CLAIM THIS VICTORY UNTIL YOU HAVE SEEN THE TRUE FACE OF WAR?

OKAY, FRIEND, I'LL TAKE A LOOK AND SEE THE MADNESS THAT'S WRITTEN OVER THAT LITTLE UGLY MUG OF YOURS.

OBSERVE THEN, HUMAN-- OBSERVE THE HORROR OF WAR!

AND SEE THE TRUTHS THAT LESSER MEN MAY PERISH FROM!

STARE NOW, FOOLS-- WITNESS THAT WHICH NO MAN COULD EVER DREAM TO BE TRUTH.

SEE THE TRUE FACE OF WAR...SEE THE TRUTH BEHIND YOUR OWN INSANITIES.

GAZE UPON MY VISAGE, EARTHIANS-- GAZE IN AWE AT--

--YOURSELF!!

YOU ARE THE CAUSE OF WAR. YOU ARE YOUR OWN MADNESS INCARNATE...YOU ARE YOUR OWN WORLD'S DESTRUCTION.

JOHN STORM-- DO NOT CRINGE AT WHAT YOU SEE--DO NOT HIDE FROM THE TRUTH.

AND YOU, FEMALE--WHAT HORROR DID YOU EXPECT TO SEE--

--BUT YOURSELF?!?

FOR, IS NOT WAR ALL MANKIND?

I AM WHAT YOU WISH OF ME. I AM THE END-ALL...THE BE-ALL OF ALL YOUR PETTY PREJUDICE...ALL YOUR MINDLESS GREED.

I AM WAR, PITIFUL CREATURES... WAR! WAR! WAR!

HE'S *GONE*...VANISHED JUST AS PESTILENCE DID.

WHY? *WHY*?

WAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

WHAT ELSE WAS *LEFT* FOR HIM, JOHNNY?

THERE WAS *NOTHING* MORE HE COULD DO.

AS THERE IS NOTHING MORE *WE* CAN DO. COME, WE MUST MEET WITH *REED* AND *BEN*.

OBSERVE THE *END* OF WAR...THIS IS TIME FOR *REFLECTION* ...FOR TWO STRUGGLING *ARMIES* TO TALK OF *PEACE*.

BUT ONLY FOR NOW, ALAS... ONLY FOR THE *PRESENT*.

SOON THERE WILL BE TIME FOR *ANOTHER* BATTLE... ANOTHER STRUGGLE...

WAR: IT GOES ON, AND ON, AND ON... AND ALL THE *PITY* FOR IT.

CHAPTER 3 THREE

...AND THE CHILDREN SHALL HUNGER!

YA *SURE* THIS FAMINE CREEP AIN'T *BURYIN'* HIMSELF ELSEWHERE--LIKE IN *GAY PAREE* OR MEBBE *THE RIVIERA*?

COME TA THINK ABOUT IT, WHY DOES *EVERY* BLASTED DING-BAT *INSIST* ON HAVIN' HIS FIGHT IN THE *WORST* BLAMED PEST-HOLES ON THIS MUDBALL?

IF *I* WUZ AIMIN' TA TAKE OVER THE WORLD, I'D HAVE MY *SET-UP* DOWN IN *MIAMI* WHERE MEBBE I COULD GET A *SUN TAN* WHILE THE CONQUERIN' WUZ GOIN' ON.

PROVIDIN' I *CAN* GET ME A SUN TAN, THAT IS.

HEY! WATCH WHERE YER GOIN', STRETCHO--THERE'S A BLAMED *BATTLE* DOWN THERE.

SORRY, BEN, BUT DID YOU *SAY* SOMETHING? I WASN'T LISTENING.

FIGGERS... ME, THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED *IDOL OF MILLIONS* SPOUTIN' THE *WISDOM OF THE AGES*--TO A WALKIN' TINKER-TOY COMPUTER.

BEN, I THINK I MAY HAVE JUMPED TO THE *WRONG* CONCLUSIONS ABOUT *WHY* PESTILENCE VANISHED.

I HAVEN'T NARROWED IT DOWN YET, BUT IT HAS *SOMETHING* TO DO WITH HIS STORY... IT *MUST* HAVE.

CAMBODIA:

THE *AMERICANS* HAVE GONE...YET THE *COMBAT* CONTINUES; VIETNAMESE BROTHER AGAINST VIETNAMESE BROTHER... FAMILY AGAINST FAMILY.

AND *HERE* IN CAMBODIA, THE *EFFECTS* OF A NEIGHBORING WAR ARE FELT DEEPLY INDEED--FOR IT IS THROUGH *THESE PADDIES OF RICE* THAT *SOLDIERS* MARCH...IT IS THROUGH *THESE SPARSE LANDS OF GRAIN* THAT ARMIES BATTLE.

CAMBODIA: THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF WAR, THE *LEFTOVERS OF VIOLENCE.*

YA DIDN'T HEAR A *WORD* I SAID, STRETCHO. SUMTIMES I THINK I'M GABBIN' TO A BLASTED *YANCY STREETER.*

BEN, I'VE BEEN RUNNING THIS THING THROUGH MY *MIND* A DOZEN TIMES...

...AND IT DOESN'T *FEEL* RIGHT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK...

THAT'S YER *PROBLEM*, STRETCH-- YA *THINK TOO MUCH.*

YA GOTTA LEARN TA *RELAX* A LITTLE-- MEBBE TAKE UP THE *HARMONICA.*

WITH *YOUR* MOUTH YA COULD PLAY *ALL* THE BLASTED HOLES AT ONCE.

BEN, THERE'S SOMEONE COMING-- AND HE LOOKS *DESPERATE.*

MEBBE *HE* WANTS TA LEARN, TOO.

BEN!

FOOD! I NEED FOOD. IT'S *GONE* ...ALL OF IT. NO MORE FOOD ANYWHERE.

SOLDIERS TAKE IT *ALL.*

PLEASE... GIVE ME FOOD... *PLEASE.*

CALM DOWN, SON--

--THE SOLDIERS HAVEN'T TAKEN *ANYTHING*-- IT'S ALL RIGHT THERE--IN THE *PADDIES.*

YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*... IT'S ALL GONE ...ALL OF THE FOOD IS *GONE.*

BLAST! HE *CAN'T* SEE THE FOOD

FAMINE MUST HAVE HIM *HYPNOTIZED.*

SNAP *OUT OF IT*, LAD...THERE *IS* FOOD. I *SWEAR* TO YOU THERE IS FOOD.

IT AIN'T WORKIN', STRETCH. HE'S *FLIPPIN'* OUT ON US.

HE'S *FAINTED FROM HUNGER--*

--IN THE MIDST OF A RICE PADDY.

THIS IS *MADNESS*, BEN--TOTAL *INSANITY.*

THEN GETTA LOAD A' *THIS* ONE, STRETCH--

THERE'S *BOWLS* A' FOOD JUST SITTIN' OUT HERE IN THE *OPEN*-- ALL OF 'EM *UNTOUCHED.*

FAMINE MUSTA *PUT* 'EM THERE FER SOME PRIVATE *JOKE.*

BEN--HE'S HAVING *STOMACH CONTRACTIONS...*

RIGHT NOW HE'S HIS *WORST ENEMY.* HE REFUSES TO SEE WHAT'S BEFORE HIM.

BUT IF HE *DOESN'T* WANT TO *DIE,* HE MUST *EAT*...EVEN IF *WE* HAVE TO *FORCE* HIM TO.

FOR *HIS* LIFE...AND FOR THE LIVES OF *ALL* HIS FELLOW-VILLAGERS--*HE MUST EAT!*

SPLOOSH!

STRETCH--THERE'S AN UNINVITED *DINNER GUEST* HEADIN' FER THE TABLE.

WANT ME TA TEACH 'IM THAT HE SHOULDA SENT BACK HIS *RSVP* FIRST?

DO WHAT YOU *MUST,* BEN--JUST KEEP HIM AWAY UNTIL THIS LAD STARTS *EATING* AGAIN.

COME ON, MAN--*SWALLOW.* IT'S *GOOD* FOR YOU.

EAT, SON--*EAT.*

THAT'S IT... HOLD THE BOWL BY YOURSELF... *TASTE IT*--

--NOW CHEW... *CHEW!*

OVERCOME BY HIS DAYS'-LONG *HUNGER,* CHIN-LI YAN LITERALLY *ATTACKS* THE BOWL OF FOOD--

--AND DOESN'T *SURFACE* UNTIL THERE IS *NOTHING* LEFT TO EAT.

WHILE...

YOUR DISGUSTING PLAN SHALL NOT SUCCEED, HUMAN PIGS--

--NOT AS LONG AS FAMINE RULES!

AND RULE I SHALL--FOREVER. OBSERVE, SCUM...AND WITNESS WHAT BEFALLS THOSE TASTELESS MORSELS AS THEY ARE TOUCHED BY YOUR FILTHY FLESH!

GAZE UPON THE MOST ULTIMATE OF HORRORS, PIGLETS--AS THE FOOD WASTES AWAY BEFORE HUMAN LIPS CAN SAVOR IT!

NOW, ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR DEFEAT--FOR, UNLIKE THOSE CELESTIAL FOOLS PESTILENCE AND WAR...

...NO ANCIENT CURSE SHALL LIFT ITS DAMNABLE HANDS AGAINST ME!

FAMINE SHALL SURVIVE! FAMINE SHALL THRIVE! FAMINE SHALL CONQUER!

YOU *ARE* MAD--RAVING MAD!

OR DO YOU *REALLY* BELIEVE WE'D LET YOU *DEFEAT* US WITHOUT OUR ONCE FIGHTING BACK?

THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* HAVE FOUGHT MINDLESS DEMONS AND HALF-MAD, WOULD-BE CONQUERORS *BEFORE*, HORSEMAN--

--AND THAT HASN'T STOPPED US *YET* FROM HOLDING OUR OWN!

THEN HOLD YOUR OWN WITH THE REST OF YOUR FILTHY KIND, EARTH-CRAWLERS! OR WILL YOU FAIL TO USE THOSE FAR-FAMED POWERS OF YOURS AGAINST MY MINDLESS MOUNTAIN OF HUNGER-CRAZED PEASANTS?

BEN! DON'T HURT THESE MEN...

DON'T *SWEAT* IT, STRETCH--

--I'M JUST GONNA *SHAKE* 'EM OFF...

...'FORE I TAKE ON *DUMBO* HIMSELF!

MEBBE I'M *JUST* A PILE A' LUMPY ORANGE ROCKS...

...MEBBE I'M JUST AS MUCH A *MONSTER* AS CREEPO HERE IS.

BUT, BLAST IT-- I DON'T GIT MY *JOLLIES* TAKIN' ON *INNOCENTS.*

SO, MISTER--YER FACIN' THE *BIG BOY* HIMSELF NOW, 'CAUSE IT'S *CLO--*

WAIT, BEN!

IT'S ALL JUST COME *TOGETHER!* IT WAS SOMETHING PESTILENCE SAID...SOMETHING THAT *DIDN'T* MAKE ANY SENSE UNTIL FAMINE CLARIFIED IT.

TAKE THAT AGAIN, WILLYA?

WE DON'T HAVE TO USE *FORCE*, BEN. WE DON'T HAVE TO KNOCK OURSELVES *SENSELESS* TRYING TO DEFEAT THE HORSEMEN.

WATCH!

YOU WILL NOT DEFEAT ME, SCUM! YOU CANNOT STOP FAMINE!

YOU FLIPPIN' OUT OR SUMTHIN', STRETCHO?

HE'LL CREAM YA!

DON'T *BET* ON IT, BEN!

NO ONE CAN STOP FAMINE!

KLAMMM!!

STRETCH!

COMB MY TOUPEE! HE'S *GONE!* JUST LIKE YA SAID. BUT HOW IN BLAZES--?

I'LL EXPLAIN ON OUR WAY, BEN-- BUT WE'VE GOT TO *HURRY*...

...THE *FATE OF THE WORLD* HANGS ON OUR BATTLE WITH THE FINAL HORSEMAN!

CHAPTER 4 FOUR

YOU WUZ RIGHT AGAIN, STRETCH. THE CREEP *WUZ* WAITIN' FER US LIKE HE *KNEW* WE WUZ COMIN'!

HE *DID*, BEN. BUT THAT KNOWLEDGE WILL DO HIM AS LITTLE GOOD AS IT DID HIS COLLEAGUES--*IF* MY HUNCH IS CORRECT, THAT IS.

REED! LOOK AT HIS FACE! IT'S *GLOWING!*

IT'LL BE *MORE* THAN GLOWING WHEN THE F.F. GETS DONE WITH HIM, RED--

IT'LL BE LIT UP IN *FLAMING LIGHTS*...

...*TORCH STYLE!*

MOUNT EVEREST:

IT STANDS SIX-MILES HIGH ABOVE THE HIMALAYAN PLAINS ...WAITING LIKE SOME *COSMIC MARKER* FOR THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO CONVERGE UPON...

...TO CONFRONT THE FOURTH AND MOST *FEARSOME* HORSEMAN OF ALL!

...ALL IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH!

PROVIDIN' YA CAN *REACH* 'IM IN TIME, TORCHY.

'CAUSE I AIM TA GIT MY *LICKS* IN 'FORE HE SPLITS LIKE THE *REST* A' HIS *CHICKEN OUTFIT* DID.

KA-WHAM!

HOW SORRY I AM THAT YOU HAD TO DISPLAY YOUR HUMOROUS POWERS SO, BEN GRIMM--

--IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SO EASY TO SIMPLY SUBMIT.

THERE IS NO WAY YOU CAN ESCAPE ME, YOU MUST KNOW. AFTER ALL, DID NOT REED RICHARDS HIMSELF EXPLAIN ALL TO YOU?

AND A VERY GOOD SUPPOSITION IT WAS.

BUT, ALAS, IT STILL SHALL DO YOU LITTLE GOOD EXCEPT TO GIVE YOU COMFORT AS YOU PERISH.

OBSERVE, MY FRIENDS-- THE SOMBER CLOUD APPEARING BEFORE YOU--

--ANSWERING THE CALL OF HE-WHO-STALKS-THE-SHADOWS-BETWEEN.

WHAT IN THE NAME A' *HELLO DOLLY?*

MY UNDERLINGS WERE PITIFUL CREATURES, WERE THEY NOT?

BUT, MY FRIENDS, NOW YOU HAVE MET THE ULTIMATE HORSEMAN.

I AM DEATH!

AND I HAVE CONJURED *YOUR* DEATHS TO DO YOU BATTLE!

THE FOUR OF THEM-- PREPARING TO *ATTACK!*

NO SWEAT, STRETCH-- WE'LL PUT THE QUICK *KABOSH* ON 'IM!

NOT SO QUICKLY, BEN--I'VE A HUNCH WE'D BETTER NOT BATTLE OUR *OWN* DEATH IMAGES.

AN' WHYZAT, RUBBER-BRAIN?

YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY FIGHT YOUR *OWN* DEATH-- IF YOU TRIED, THE TWO OF YOU WOULD BE *DESTROYED*--

--LIKE MATTER AND ANTI-MATTER COMING TOGETHER!

OH!

IF THAT'S THE *CASE*, EINSTEIN, THEN LEMME HANDLE THIS *PHONY* LI'L *MATCHSTICK*.

I'VE BEEN WANTIN' TA TAKE ON THE GEN-EWE-WINE TORCHIE LIKE THIS FOR *AGES* NOW.

WHUMP!

STEEE-RRIKKEEE!

AN' IN THE BOTTOM A' THE *NINTH*, THE HOT-SHOT KID GOES *DOWN* UNDER A PERFECTLY PITCHED *SNOWBALL*.

EAT YER HEART OUT, *HOWARD COSELL!*

MORTAL SWINE! MY DEMON-HAIR MOVES JUST AS QUICKLY--JUST AS *DEADLY*--AS THE *REAL* MEDUSA'S!

PERHAPS IT DOES, BUT YOU HAVEN'T *NEARLY* THE TOTAL CONTROL THE TRUE *INHUMAN* HAS--!

IF YOU *HAD*, I COULDN'T CAPTURE YOU AS *EASILY* AS I DID--

THE *REAL* MEDUSA COULD STOP THIS DEADLY *PLUNGE*--

--IN A WAY AN *UNLIVING* IMAGE SUCH AS YOURSELF COULD NEVER HOPE TO TRY.

NOT *BAD*, BROTHER-IN-LAW. NOW, LET'S *SEE* HOW *YOUR* DEATH-FORM FARES AGAINST A *NOVA-BURST* FROM THE HUMAN TORCH!

BLAST! HE TWISTED HIMSELF AWAY AT THE LAST MOMENT!

MY FLAME *MISSED* HIM!

--AND THAT *PHONY* REED'S BEING CAUGHT UP IN THE *AVALANCHE!*

WELL, *HALLELUJAH!* I MUST'VE BURNED AWAY A *HOLDING* ROCK OR TWO--

SO, THREE HAVE SURVIVED. GOOD, QUITE GOOD--

--BUT YOUR FEMALE MEMBER... YOUR WEAK LINK... SHALL DEFINITELY FAIL--

--AND WILL BRING THE REST OF YOU TO YOUR KNEES IN HER FAILURE.

"WEAK LINK," DEATH? BY *AGON'S GENES* YOU COULD *NOT* HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG!

MEDUSA IS FAR FROM BEING A WEAK LINK...

...SHE IS AN *EQUAL* MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR...

...WITH AN EQUAL *RIGHT* TO THROW YOUR OWN *WORDS* AND *CREATION* RIGHT BACK AT YOU!

*NOOO*OOOOPP!!

BREEEE-ANNNGGGGHHH!!!

GONE! JUST LIKE THE *OTHER THREE!*

THE *ANCIENT CURSE* STILL WORKS--JUST AS FAMINE *FEARED* IT WOULD...AND JUST AS I REALIZED IT *MUST!*

PESTILENCE SAID IT FIRST ...THAT A RACE *MIGHTIER* THAN HIS OWN DROVE THE HORSEMEN OFF THE EARTH MILLENNIA AGO!

WHEN *FAMINE* SAID HE WOULDN'T FALL VICTIM TO THE ANCIENT CURSE-- I REALIZED THAT OTHER RACE MUST HAVE SET SOME SORT OF *PROTECTION* DEVICE AGAINST THE HORSEMEN SHOULD THEY DARE RETURN--

--*WE* ACTIVATED THAT PROTECTOR WHEN WE BATTLED THE HORSEMEN!

YOU OKAY, MEDUSA? YOU WERE *CLOSEST* TO THE EXPLOSION!

YA *TOLD* US ALL THAT ON THE WAY HERE, STRETCH! WE GOTTA GO THROUGH IT *AGAIN*?

I AM *WELL*, JOHNNY...THE BRUISES WILL SOON HEAL!

SO WE *DEFEATED* THEM CREEPS? SO WHUT? WHAT'S TO STOP 'EM FROM COMIN' BACK SOMEDAY?

I *DOUBT* THAT, BEN-- THE PROTECTOR DEVICE TELEPORTED THEM *HOME* AGAIN. I DON'T THINK THEY'LL RETURN.

OKAY! *OKAY!* BUT I'VE STILL GOT A MAD ON-- A GIANT-SIZE *MAD!*

WHY, BEN-- *WHY*?

'CAUSE NOT ONCE DURING THIS WHOLE BLASTED *SHEEBANG* DID I GIT TA SAY--"*IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!*"

AN' WHUT'S *WORSE*, NOBODY EVEN *NOTICED!*

NEXT: *WHERE SOARS THE SILVER SURFER!* 'NUFF SAID?

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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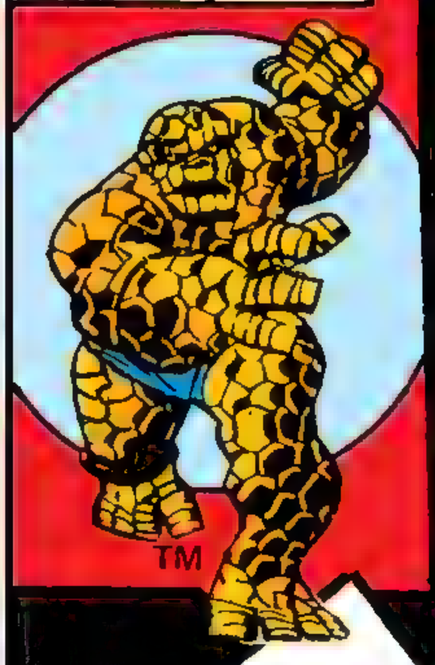

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE AS DANGEROUS AS-- MAHKIZMO! AND NEITHER HAS BEN GRIMM!

R. Buckler

THIS IS IT! THE STORY WE HAD TO CALL--

THUNDRA AND LIGHTNING!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE MESSIAH COMES: NOT **EXACTLY** THE SITUATION OUR HEROES FIND THEMSELVES IN AFTER THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS (SHOWN IN OUR PAST FOUR ISSUES), BUT IT'S FAIRLY **CLOSE.**

JUST ABOUT EVERY PROBLEM THEY HAVE HAS BEEN **SOLVED!** REED AND SUE ARE BACK TOGETHER, LITTLE FRANKLIN IS OUT OF HIS COMA, JOHNNY IS GETTING OVER HIS BOUT OF UNREQUITED LOVE...

YEP. EVERY-THING'S **SWELL.**

THUNDRA AND LIGHTNING!

PART ONE

ONLY **QUESTION** IS--WHAT DO THEY DO **NOW?**

NUTS. I **KNEW** THESE THREADS WUZ A BAD IDEA FROM THE BLAMED **BEGINNIN'!**

RIGHT: BUY SOME NEW **CLOTHES!**

GERRY CONWAY, *AUTHOR* * RICH BUCKLER, *ARTIST*
JOE SINNOTT, *EMBELLISHER*
ARTIE SIMEK, *LETTERER* * P. GOLDBERG, *COLORIST*
ROY THOMAS, *EDITOR*

LISTEN, BUD--YA MIGHT AS WELL PUT THE REST OF THOSE DUDS BACK WHERE YA *GOT* 'EM.

THE WAY I SEE IT, *NUTHIN'* IS GONNA MAKE ME LOOK GOOD--

SO I BETTER *QUIT* WHILE I'M *AHEAD.*

IF YOU *INSIST,* MR. GRIMM...

...PERHAPS THE YOUNG MR. STORM WILL BE SOMEWHAT MORE... *ACCOMMODATING.*

I'M WITH *BEN,* SIR. TRYING ON *ONE* SUIT IS ABOUT ALL I CAN *TAKE.*

OH, *COME,* MR. STORM.

I CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR FRIEND'S RELUCTANCE--ONE *DOES HATE* REVEALING AN *UNFLATTERING FIGURE*--BUT IN *YOUR* CASE--

HOLD IT.

WHAT WUZ THAT CRACK ABOUT MY *FIGGER,* BUBBO?

NOTHING, MR. GRIMM! =*URRRRKKKK!*= NOTHING AT *ALL!* =*ULLLLPPP!*=

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.

HEY, BIG FELLA--DON'T LET BOZOS LIKE HIM GET UNDER YOUR *SKIN.*

HE'S NOT *WORTH* IT.

EASY FER *YOU* TA SAY, TORCHIE.

ESPECIALLY THAT BIT ABOUT "*SKIN.*"

OPEN MOUTH. INSERT *FOOT.*

*A SHORT WHILE LATER, WHEN THE NECESSARY FISCAL TRANSACTION HAS BEEN **COMPLETED,** AND BEN AND JOHNNY PREPARE TO **RETURN** TO THEIR HEADQUARTERS, A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...*

AW, *BEANS.* YOU'D THINK A GUY WOULD GET *USED* TA ALL THAT BUNK.

IT AINT AS THOUGH I JUST *BECAME* THE THING, YA KNOW.

I'VE *BEEN* THIS WAY FOR *YEARS.*

SAY, I'VE BEEN *THINKING,* BEN--WHY DON'T WE STOP FOR A *PIZZA* SOMEWHERE?

WHO'S BUYIN' --ME OR *YOU?*

ME.

YOU'RE *ON.*

IT'S JUST THAT--WELL, YOU AND I HAVEN'T BEEN REALLY *CLOSE,* BEN, AND I THINK IT'S TIME--

WHAT IS THIS, A LUNCHBREAK OR A BLASTED *MARRIAGE PROPOSAL?*

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, BEN. THESE DAYS, WE *BOTH* NEED A FRIEND--

--AND SINCE WE'RE *ALREADY* TEAM-MATES, IT MAKES SENSE THAT WE-- *HUH?*

BEN! WHAT'S *HAPPENING* TO THE BAXTER BUILDING?

GOT ME, KID!

SINCE WHEN DOES REED PUT UP *CHRISTMAS LIGHTS* IN *JULY?*

IT'S GONNA *EXPLODE! THAT BUILDIN'S GONNA EXPLODE!*

WHAT'S *HAPPENING* UP THERE? ALL THOSE FLASHING *LIGHTS--*

--IT'S LIKE AN *ELECTRICAL STORM--* CENTERED ON THAT *OFFICE BUILDING!*

DON'T YOU *KNOW* THAT PLACE?

THAT'S WHERE THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* HANG OUT.

MAYBE THEY'VE GOT SOME SORTA *BOMB* UP THERE!

BENJAMIN-- ARE YOU GETTING THE SAME FEEL-ING *I'M* GETTING?

THAT SOMETHING'S DESPERATELY, DANGEROUSLY *WRONG?*

I THINK WE'VE GOT *TROUBLE,* TORCHIE.

BETTER DO YER *STUFF.*

FLAME ON!

OH, NO! I FORGOT--THIS ISN'T ONE OF MY *SPECIALLY-TREATED SUITS!*

THAT'S A *HUNDRED AND TEN BUCKS-- SHOT!*

YOU AIN'T THE *ONLY* ONE WITH EGG ON YER FACE, FLAME-BRAIN.

YA CAN MARK ME DOWN FER A HUNDRED'N FIFTY *TOO!*

PPPLIPPP!

SOMEBODY OWES US *MONEY,* BUDDY--AND I'VE GOT A HUNCH IT *ISN'T* REED!

SIS AND HE WERE TALK-ING ABOUT A DAY IN THE *COUNTRY* WHEN WE ALL GOT UP THIS MORNING--

--AND IF THEY'RE *THERE*--

THAT MEANS SOMEBODY *ELSE*--IS *HERE!*

COULD YA *REPEAT* THAT, TORCHIE? I'D LIKE TA PUT IT IN MY *MEMORY BOOK*-- UNDER "*FAVORITE SAYIN'S*"!

HEY-- DIDYA *HEAR* ME?

TORCHIE?

SORRY, BEN; AT THE MOMENT, THE HUMAN TORCH IS *INDISPOSED.*

HE'S JUST BEEN RUDELY *INTRODUCED* TO THE *VILLAIN* OF OUR PIECE--

CROMP!

MAHKIZMO: THE NUCLEAR MAN!

WHERE IS SHE, WELP?

ANSWER ME *NOW,* AND MAYBE I'LL SPARE YOUR MISERABLE *HIDE!*

RESIST ME--AND I'LL TEAR YOU LIMB FROM *LIMB!*

WHERE IS THE SHE-WITCH, *THUNDRA?*

THUNDRA-- WHO CALLS HERSELF A *FEMIZON!*

MMM. THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY **VALID** QUESTION, DOESN'T IT? WHERE **IS** THUNDRA? AND MOREOVER, WHAT DOES THIS HAIRY-CHESTED CHARACTER **WANT** WITH HER, ANYWAY?

IF YOU'LL LET US DO IT **OUR** WAY, WE'LL ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS ***INDIRECTLY***-- FIRST BY LOOKING IN ON ***ANOTHER*** MEMBER OF THE FF CALLED --

MEDUSA!

THESE ***HUMANS!***

I COME TO THE ***UNITED NATIONS*** TO LEARN THE LEGAL ***STATUS*** OF MY COUNTRY-MEN*--

--AND I AM HOUNDED BY ***REPORTERS*** AT EVERY ***TURN!***

*MEANING THE ***INHUMANS,*** OF COURSE. --ROY.

LADY, LISTEN-- CAN I ***TALK*** TO YOU?

NO.

C'MON, GIVE A GUY A ***CHANCE,*** WILLYA?

I TOLD YOU --I'VE NOTHING TO ***SAY.***

EVERYBODY HAS ***SOME-THING*** TO SAY, SISTER.

WHAT'S THE ***DEAL*** WITH YOU SUB-HUMANS, HUH?

SUB-HUMANS?

LIKE ***ALL*** YOUR KIND, YOU ARE A ***FOOL.***

I GAVE YOU MY REPLY--YET YOU ***PERSISTED.***

NOT ONLY DID YOU ***PERSIST--***

--YOU ***INSULTED.***

IF I MIGHT ***EVER*** HAVE HAD ANY-THING TO ***SAY*** TO YOU--

--I CERTAINLY ***DO NOT*** HAVE ANYTHING ***NOW.***

THE REPORTER ***SHRUGS.***

FOR HIM, A MINOR ***DEFEAT...*** BUT FOR ***MEDUSA...***

...PERHAPS THE START OF A PERSONAL ***CRISIS...?***

BUT, BEFORE THE CRISIS CAN ***BURST...***

YOU SHOULD HAVE ***SMASHED*** HIM, WOMAN.

THE PUP ***DESERVED*** IT, AFTER ALL.

THUNDRA! WE WERE WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU AFTER THE BATTLE WITH SUB-MARINER.*

REED WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR--

HELP?

I'M SURPRISED HE ACCEPTED IT.

*TWO ISSUES AGO. --ROY.

STILL--REED RICHARDS HAS BEEN REASONABLE, FOR A MAN--WHICH IS WHY I'VE DECIDED TO COME TO HIM--THROUGH YOU--WITH MY-- PROBLEM.

I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND, THUNDRA. YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

IN A WAY, I AM THE PROBLEM, SISTER--

--FOR YOU SEE-- I DON'T REALLY EXIST!

"I COME FROM A FUTURE, MEDUSA-- ONE WHICH WOULD BE A NIGHTMARE TO MEN OF YOUR TIME:

"A WORLD IN WHICH WOMEN ARE THE DOMINANT GENDER--

"--A LAND RULED BY FEMIZONS*--

*FROM SAVAGE TALES #1; CREDIT: STAN LEE. --ROY.

"--AMONG WHOM I WAS THE STRONGEST, THE BRAVEST-- THE MOST POWERFUL.

"BUT I SAID I COME FROM A FUTURE: YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, THERE IS MORE THAN ONE.

"IN POINT OF FACT, THERE ARE A THOUSAND MILLION ALTERNATE FUTURES, ONE BORN EVERY TIME A DECISION IS MADE.

"FOR EACH DECISION THERE IS A DIFFERENT FUTURE, AD INFINITUM...

"ONE SUCH WORLD IS OUR OWN, WHERE THE FEMIZONS RULE.

"ANOTHER SUCH WORLD IS MACHUS...A REALITY CONTROLLED BY MEN.

"MACHUS IS A VICIOUS, BESTIAL PLACE--WHERE WOMEN ARE KEPT AS SLAVES, AND MEN FIGHT ETERNAL WARS!

"A MONSTROUS WORLD, INDEED.

CLANG!

"YET, RECENTLY --OUR WORLDS HAVE BEEN DRAWING TOGETHER.

"UNEXPLICABLY, OUR MEN REBEL--

YAAAHHHH

"--AND WE ARE FORCED TO SQUELCH THE REBELLION --BY BLOODY MEANS.

"WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF A PROBABILITY CRISIS...

"...DURING WHICH THE WORLD OF THE FEMIZONS... AND THE WORLD OF MACHUS...WILL SLOWLY FLOW TOGETHER UNLESS...

...AN EXAMPLE IS MADE!

YOU MUST GO BACK INTO THE PAST, THUNDRA--

--THERE, TO FIND AND BATTLE THE EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL MAN--

"'--AND DEFEAT HIM SO UTTERLY, MEN WILL LEARN THEIR LESSON --FOR ALL TIME!'

"THUS, MACHUS WOULD BE ELIMINATED. NOW, MEDUSA--MY PROBLEM:"

LATER FOR THAT. RIGHT NOW, WE'VE GOT **OTHER** PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH, SUCH AS THE PROBLEM **JOHNNY STORM** IS HAVING, TRYING TO **SURVIVE**...

YEEEEOW!

THIS GOON'S SO **BIG**, HE'S GRABBED BOTH MY **LEGS**--

AND HE'S **CRUSHING** THEM!

BAH! I'VE NO PATIENCE WITH **FOOLS**, BOY--!

IF YOU WON'T ANSWER ON YOUR **OWN**-- I'LL **MAKE** YOU ANSWER-- **LIKE THIS!**

SPRAK

MY HAND! YOUR BODY'S A MASS OF **FIRE**--

--YOU **BURNED** ME!

I'LL BREAK YOUR **NECK** FOR THAT, YEARLING! **NO ONE** INJURES **MAHKIZMO**--

--**LEAST** OF ALL AN **EFFEMINATE** LIKE **YOU!**

EH? MISSED--?

ENRAGED BY JOHNNY'S RESISTANCE, THE MYSTERIOUS MAHKIZMO LUNGES AFTER THE FLEEING HUMAN TORCH--

--AND SO HE DOESN'T WITNESS THE ARRIVAL OF JOHNNY'S REINFORCEMENTS--

WHOMP!

--BENJAMIN J. GRIMM, KNOWN TO FRIEND AND FOE ALIKE AS--

--THE BLUE-EYED THING.

SOMETHIN' TELLS ME WE'VE GOT A LITTLE FIGHT ON OUR HANDS!

CRASH!

BA-THOOM!!

HOLY COW! THIS JERK AIN'T KIDDIN'!

MAHKIZMO NEVER JESTS ORANGE-SKINNED WHIMP.

AS I DISPOSED OF YOUR ALLY, SO SHALL I DISPOSE OF YOU--

--UNLESS YOU TELL ME THE WHERE-ABOUTS OF THE FEMALE CALLED THUNDRA!

FAT CHANCE, CHARLIE.

YOU WANT HER-- FIND HER YERSELF!

I WARN YOU, PRE-MAN... I WILL HAVE MY WAY!

I WILL NOT REST UNTIL THE WOMAN IS IN MY HANDS--

--AND YOU'RE TOO WEAK TO STOP ME!

NUTS TA YOU, MAC!

THUNDRA AIN'T NO *FRIEND* OF MINE--BUT *HER* I CAN STAND!

POW!

YOU JUST GIVE ME *HIVES!*

SPA-CRUMP!

SILENCE.

IT'S CLEAR YOU DON'T YET *UNDERSTAND* THE EXTENT OF MY *POWER.*

YOU THINK YOU CAN *DEFEAT* ME--THAT YOU CAN *MOCK* ME AND INSULT MY *MANHOOD*--

--AND YOU'RE *WRONG!*

AMONG THE MEN OF MY WORLD, I AM THE *STRONGEST*--!

I, AND *ONLY I,* HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO WIELD THE *ULTIMATE ENERGY*--

--A *POWER* THE LIKES OF WHICH YOUR FEEBLE, FEMININE WORLD HAS NEVER *SEEN*--

--*POWER* WHICH GIVES ME MY *NAME:*

MAHKIZMO--

THE NUCLEAR MAN!

THOOM!

RRRRUUMMMMBBBLE

THRASH!

UHHHH... TORCHIE, REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT *TROUBLE?*

OLD BUDDY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME *TWICE.*

UH-HUH.

ON THAT NOTE, MAYBE WE'D BETTER TURN ELSE-WHERE.

UN FACT, WHY DON'T WE RETURN TO--

--THUNDRA AND MEDUSA!

YOU SAY THERE'S SOME SORT OF TEMPORAL FIELD SURROUNDING THE BAXTER BUILDING--

--WHICH IS WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO THE THING, RATHER THAN THE HULK--OR THOR--WHO ARE BOTH STRONGER MEN?

PRECISELY. MY PROBLEM IS--I DON'T WANT TO BATTLE THE THING.

IN THE FEW MONTHS I'VE BEEN IN THIS TIME--I'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING OF YOUR WORLD--AND OF BEN GRIMM--

--AND I'M NO LONGER CERTAIN THAT THE FEMIZON PATH IS THE PROPER PATH FOR THE FUTURE!

YET NEITHER IS MACHUS... WHICH BRINGS ME TO MY SECOND PROBLEM...

MAHKIZMO!

MAHKIZMO: WE KEEP COMING BACK TO HIM, DON'T WE?

JUST TO KEEP YOU TANTALIZED, WE'LL BREAK OFF WITH OUR TWO FEMME FATALES AND LOOK IN ON THE REMAINING MEMBER OF OUR FANTASTIC FOURSOME...

REED RICHARDS, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS MR. FANTASTIC, FOR REASONS WHICH WILL SOON BE OBVIOUS.

AT THE MOMENT, HE'S RETURNING ALONE FROM A DAY IN THE COUNTRY WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILD... AND TO SAY THE LEAST...

...HE'S HAPPY.

FUNNY HOW I NEVER REALIZED HOW BEAUTIFUL A SUMMER DAY CAN BE.

HAVING SUE BACK--HAVING MY SON BACK--MAKES THE WORLD WORTHWHILE--

--AND MAKES ME FEEL JUST A LITTLE BIT CRAZY!

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD HAVE BEEN UPSET THAT SUE PREFERRED TO REMAIN WITH HER FRIENDS A FEW DAYS, RATHER THAN RETURN WITH ME TO THE CITY.

BUT THAT TIME'S LONG PAST. WE'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH TOGETHER--

--I'M GLAD TO HAVE HER ON ANY TERMS, EVEN IF--

WHAT IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN--?

THERE'S A GAPING **HOLE** IN THE SIDE OF THE BAXTER BUILDING--RIGHT WHERE MY **MAIN LAB** FACES THE STREET!

--IT'S **GOING WILD!**

GREAT SCOTT! THE PORTABLE **GEIGER COUNTER** ON MY FANTASTI-CYCLE--

THE AREA'S **FLOODED** WITH RADIATED **BETA PARTICLES!**

COULD JOHNNY OR BEN HAVE TOUCHED ONE OF MY **DEVICES**-- ACCIDENTALLY SET OFF A **CONTAINED FUSION REACTOR**--

THE EXPLOSION COULD HAVE **KILLED** THEM!

LIKE A HUMAN **RUBBER BAND,** REED RICHARDS STRETCHES DOWNWARD--

--AND THE FIRST THING HE SEES SEEMS TO **CONFIRM** HIS EARLY GUESSWORK:

THE HUMAN TORCH --LYING SEMI-**UN-CONSCIOUS** JUST WITHIN THE JAGGED HOLE--

--AND **BESIDE** HIM--

--**EQUALLY** STUNNED: THE NORMALLY-INCORRIGIBLE **THING.**

THEN REED SEES SOME-THING **ELSE,** AND ALL HIS THEORIES ARE SUMMARILY **SHATTERED.**

HE SEES MAHKIZMO...

...AND MAHKIZMO SEES **HIM.**

I WANT **THUNDRA,** MALE-LING.

GIVE HER TO ME. **NOW.**

MAHKIZMO DOESN'T **WAIT** FOR REED'S REPLY.

AS THOUGH SENSING THAT THIS MAN, TOO, WILL **RESIST** HIM, MAHKIZMO THROWS HIMSELF **FORWARD**...

...AND WITH A BESTIAL **SNARL**...

KAPOW!

STRAINING HIS STRETCHING-POWERS TO THE ABSOLUTE **LIMIT**, REED RICHARDS TRIES TO **AVOID** THE NUCLEAR MAN'S PILEDRIVER **BLOWS**.

HE FAILS.

AGAIN AND AGAIN, MAHKIZMO **PUMMELS** THE LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR --STRIKING WITH A FEROCITY THAT WOULD **ASTOUND** THE MOST BRUTAL OF MEN.

HE SEEMS ALMOST **MANIACAL** IN HIS RAGE--AND PERHAPS IT IS THIS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE WHICH **DEFEATS** REED RICHARDS--

FOR IN THE END, DESPITE ALL HIS EFFORTS--**REED RICHARDS FALLS!**

SIMULTANEOUSLY, THIRTY-SIX STORIES **BELOW**...

THE EXPLOSIONS HAVE **STOPPED!**

LOOK! NOW SOMEONE'S **FALLING!**

IT'S THAT **RICHARDS** FELLA--HE'S GONNA GET **KILLED!**

AND **AMONG** THOSE WHO NOW CROWD THE STREET OUTSIDE THE BAXTER BUILDING--

--WHO STAND **HORRIFIED**--

--ARE **MEDUSA** AND **THUNDRA**-- BOTH FROZEN WITH **HELPLESSNESS!**

HAIRLESS **BABE,** YOU AND YOUR KIND ARE TOO **FRAIL** TO OPPOSE ME-- AS YOU'VE LEARNED MUCH **TOO LATE.**

I AM THE INHERITOR OF THIS WORLD AND **TIME**--

--I, MAHKIZMO--BORN AND BRED IN **MACHUS,** COME TO CLAIM THE WOMAN, **THUNDRA**--

--AND WITH HER, **MY RACIAL DESTINY!**

BUT REED RICHARDS DOESN'T **HEAR** THESE GRATING WORDS.

WIND WHISTLES TOO **LOUDLY** IN HIS EARS; WIND--AND THE TRIUMPHANT CRY OF **DEATH!**

NEXT ISSUE: PART TWO OF "THUNDRA AND LIGHTNING"... **A WORLD OF MADNESS MADE**

CATCH IT IF YOU CAN, FRANTIC ONE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

MEDUSA! THIS THING'S *DRAININ'* *THE LIFE* OUT OF US!

YOU CAN'T LEAVE US *NOW!* *NOT NOW!*

BUT I *MUST,* BEN GRIMM-- EVEN IF IT MEANS--*YOUR* **DEATHS!**

WORLD OF *MADNESS*-- WORLD OF DOOM!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

WITNESS THE STRENGTH OF MAHKIZMO, THE NUCLEAR MAN:

SINGLE-HANDEDLY, HE'S MANAGED TO OVER-POWER THREE OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--BATTERING BOTH THE HUMAN TORCH AND THE THING ALMOST INTO INSENSIBILITY--AND KNOCKING REED RICHARDS THROUGH THE WALL OF THE FF'S THIRTY-SIXTH FLOOR HEADQUARTERS--!

AND IF THAT ISN'T A PLACE TO BEGIN THE MIND-BLASTING SECOND CHAPTER OF THIS LATEST MARVEL EPIC--THEN, PILGRIM, WE DON'T KNOW OUR COMIC BOOKS!

THUNDRA AND LIGHTNING! PART TWO

A WORLD OF MADNESS MADE!

GERRY CONWAY * RICH BUCKLER
AUTHOR — ARTIST

JIM MOONEY, EMBELLISHER
ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER
JAN BRUNNER, COLORIST

ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

THUNDRA! IT'S REED-- HE'LL BE KILLED!

YOU'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM-- YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE STRONG ENOUGH!

A-1 COOPER MOVING STORAGE

I'M NOT SURE I SHOULD TRY TO SAVE HIM, MEDUSA--

--CONSIDERING THE WAY HIS KIND HAVE ALWAYS TREATED MINE!

STILL, EVEN IF HE IS A MAN--HE'S NOT QUITE LIKE ALL HIS BROTHERS!

HE DOESN'T DESERVE TO DIE THIS WAY--AND IF I CAN JUST TIME THIS PROPERLY--

HE WON'T!

WHOOMP!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! DIDYA SEE THAT? SHE CAUGHT HIM--

ALL BY HERSELF-- THAT GIRLIE CAUGHT HIM!

IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES, THUNDRA--

LET'S NOT EMBARRASS OURSELVES WITH CLICHÉS, MEDUSA.

THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE. YOU MUST ATTEND TO RICHARDS--

--WHILE I MUST SEE TO-- MAHKIZMO!

WITH AN ATHLETIC GRACE THAT BELIES HER EIGHT-FOOT **FRAME**, THE AMAZON KNOWN ONLY AS THUNDRA QUICKLY SCALES THE THIRTY-SIX FLOORS TO THE **TOWER** OF THE BAXTER BUILDING--

--AND THERE SHE CONFRONTS A SCENE OF **PRIMORDIAL POWER**-- THE TIMELESS VISION OF A VICTOR STANDING SUPREME OVER HIS **VICTIMS**--

--A VISION WHICH DOES **MUCH** TO TURN THE WOMAN THUNDRA'S **STOMACH.**

SO, WOMAN-- YOU'VE FINALLY CRAWLED FROM YOUR HIDING PLACE--TO CONFRONT YOUR **CONQUEROR!**

BEG ME FOR MERCY **NOW**-- AND I **MAY** SEE FIT TO **SPARE** YOU.

FORCE MY HAND-- AND I'LL WHIP YOU LIKE A **CHILD!**

WHIP ME IF YOU *CAN,* ANIMAL.

THERE ISN'T A MALE *ALIVE* WHO CAN DEFEAT *THUNDRA*--

LEAST OF ALL-- SCUM LIKE *YOU!*

GOOD. *GOOD.* I'VE ALWAYS *SAID*--

I *LIKE* A WOMAN WITH *SPIRIT!*

SNARLING, THE TWO ENEMIES FROM OUT OF TIME **ATTACK**--

--AND FOR ONE BLINDING INSTANT, THEIR FIGURES SEEM TO **MERGE** *IN A BLAST OF ROARING* **ENERGY!**

THEN, EVEN AS THE BLAST OF POWER **WAKENS** *THE MEN LYING STUNNED UPON THE FLOOR--*

--THE POWER **FADES**--

--AND BOTH THUNDRA AND MAHKIZMO ARE--

GONE!

BEN, DID THAT JUST *HAPPEN*-- OR AM I JUST *IMAGINING* THINGS?

IF *YOU* ARE, THEN I AM *TOO,* TORCHIE!

BOTH OF 'EM JUST *VANISHED*--

--WITHOUT EVEN GIVIN' ME THE CHANCE TA EVEN UP THE **SCORE!**

BENJAMIN! IS THUNDRA ALL RIGHT? THE WAY SHE WAS **TALKING**--

I WAS AFRAID SHE MIGHT--

HER? WHAT ABOUT **US**, FOR CRIPE'S SAKE!

AINT YA FORGETTING--? **WE'RE** YER BLASTED TEAM-MATES, NOT THAT NUTTY REFUGEE FROM A **WOMEN'S LIB MEET-IN'!**

THAT MAHKIZMO GUY PRACTICALLY WIPED THE **FLOOR** WITH US --NOT TA MENTION WHAT HE ALMOST DID TA **REED!**

EASY, OLD FRIEND.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, THUNDRA SAVED MY **LIFE**-- AND PROBABLY **YOURS**, AS WELL!

IF ONLY WE KNEW **WHY**-- WHO SHE WAS, AND WHAT CONNECTION SHE HAD WITH THAT **GIANT**--!

I CAN ANSWER THAT, REED.

BEFORE WE ARRIVED AT THE BAXTER BUILDING, THUNDRA **TOLD** ME...

MAHKIZMO COMES FROM A WORLD OF THE **FUTURE**--CALLED **MACHUS**--

--A BRUTAL WORLD DOMINATED TOTALLY BY **MEN**--!

"**SHE**, ON THE OTHER HAND, COMES FROM AN **ALTERNATE REALITY**, A FUTURE-WORLD CO-EXISTING IN TIME WITH MACHUS...

"...A REALITY IN WHICH THE **FEMIZONS** RULE...*

*SHOWN LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

"--AND IN WHICH **THUNDRA** IS THE STRONGEST FEMALE OF **ALL.**

"SHE WAS SENT TO **OUR** TIME, BECAUSE MACHUS HAD BEGUN TO **SLIP OVER** INTO HER WORLD.

"SHE WAS TO DEFEAT OUR MOST POWERFUL **MALE**-- AND MAHKIZMO WAS SENT TO **STOP** HER.

"HE SUCCEEDED--BY BRINGING HER BACK **WITH** HIM-- **TO MACHUS!**"

SEVEN HOURS AFTER MEDUSA'S WORDS STOP RINGING IN OUR HEROES' EARS...

REED, ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU CAN MODIFY DOCTOR DOOM'S TIME MACHINE--TO TRAVEL CROSS-WISE IN TIME?

I CERTAINLY INTEND TO TRY, SUE.

WE OWE THUNDRA OUR GREATEST EFFORT--BECAUSE SHE MADE HER GREATEST SACRIFICE, TO SAVE OUR LIVES.

ACCORDING TO MEDUSA, THUNDRA KNEW THAT MAHKIZMO WAS SENT TO CAPTURE HER.

AND SHE ALLOWED HERSELF TO BE CAPTURED--

--SO THAT OUR TIME WOULD BE SPARED THE DESTRUCTION OF A BATTLE BETWEEN MAHKIZMO AND HER, A BATTLE NEITHER COULD WIN--

--WHICH COULD ONLY SERVE TO DESTROY OUR WORLD!

SHE-SHE'S VERY BRAVE, ISN'T SHE?

NO BRAVER THAN YOU, SUE. YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO RETURN FROM YOUR VACATION IN THE COUNTRY--

--BUT I'M GLAD YOU DID.

I NEED YOUR STRENGTH AND YOUR LOVE, DARLING.

THIS IS ONE JOURNEY--FROM WHICH I MIGHT NEVER RETURN.

AS ALWAYS, TIME MOVES SLOWLY BY...AND WHEN THREE MORE HOURS HAVE PASSED, AND DAWN ONCE MORE LIGHTENS THE EASTERN SKY...

...THE FINAL HOUR APPROACHES...

...AND THE FF GATHERS IN THE TOWER LAB... FOR A MEETING WITH TIME, AND DESTINY.

ALL SET, REED?

JUST ABOUT, JOHNNY. WE'RE GOING TO TEST THE DEVICE NOW.

TEST IT?

YA MEAN THE GADGET'S *FINISHED?*

THAT'S *CORRECT,* BEN. I'VE COMPLETED ALL THE NECESSARY *MODIFICATIONS.*

DOOM'S TIME-DEVICE WILL TRAVEL *SIDEWAYS* THROUGH TIME, AS WELL AS BACKWARDS AND *FORWARDS*... OR SO I *HOPE.*

TIME

SUB SPACE

X EAR

TIME CONTINUUM

DIMENSION

SWELL. SO WHAT DO I DO WITH *THIS* DOHICKY, BIG BRAIN?

YA ASKED ME TA PICK IT *UP* FER YA ALMOST AN *HOUR* AGO!

WHAT? OH...*THAT.* PUT IT DOWN, *BEN.*

I DON'T NEED IT *AFTER ALL.*

*AND SO, WHEN BEN'S SPLUTTERING HAS DIED DOWN, AND HE'S JOINED JOHNNY AND MEDUSA ON THE SURFACE OF THE GLISTENING **TIME-DEVICE,** REED RICHARDS MAKES A FEW LAST ADJUSTMENTS--*

*--FLICKS A SWITCH ON HIS MASTER CONTROL BOARD INTO THE "**ON**" POSITION--*

*--AND PREPARES TO TAKE HIS PLACE BESIDE HIS FRIENDS: TENSE--BUT **SELF-ASSURED.***

IF ANYTHING GOES WRONG, SUE, WE'LL BE DEPENDING ON *YOU* TO PULL US BACK TO THE *PRESENT.*

OUR PORTABLE CONTROL SYSTEM *COULD* PROVE DEFECTIVE--THROUGH THE POSSIBILITY *IS* RATHER FAINT.

HOLD IT A SECOND! YA MEAN THIS GIZMO AINT *PERFECTED?*

LEMME OUTTA HERE!

REED'S REPLY IS A WEARY **LAUGH**; BUT THE LAUGHTER IS SOON **DROWNED** IN A SLOWLY-BUILDING **HUM**...

HHUMM

MMM

...A HUM WHICH ALSO SWALLOWS SUE RICHARD'S WHISPERED **GOODBYE**...

MMM

...TO A HUSBAND WHO BECOMES A BLAZE OF **LIGHT**...

...WHICH FADES...

...AND FLICKERS **OUT**.

WHILE, WITHIN THE TIME-DILATION EFFECT SURROUNDING THE CIRCULAR **CHRONAL TRANSPORTER**...

REED! LOOK AT OUR **LAB**--SOMETHING'S **HAPPENING** TO IT!

THE WALLS ARE COLLAPSING--EVERYTHING'S GETTING **OLDER**--COVERED WITH **DUST**--!

WHAT'D'YA **EXPECT**, YA DINGBAT?

WE'RE TRAVELIN' INTA THE **FUTURE**, AINT WE?

DIDN'T YER MOMMY EVER TELL YA--***NUTHIN'*** LASTS **FOREVER**?

NO, BEN--JOHNNY'S **RIGHT**. I'VE EXPERIENCED TIME TRAVEL BEFORE--WE **ALL** HAVE--AND I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY **SEEN** THE WORLD CHANGING AROUND ME!

THE **ADJUSTMENTS** I MADE TO DOOM'S DEVICE--

THAT'S THE ANSWER--IT ***MUST*** BE!

WHAT ANSWER, REED? PLEASE--THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR **RIDDLES**!

"**SOMEHOW**, WE'RE NOT ACTUALLY RIDING **WITHIN** THE TIME STREAM NOW--WE'RE RIDING **OUTSIDE** IT.

"**WHAT** WE'RE SEEING IS THE **FUTURE** OF NEW YORK--

"**CENTURIES** FROM NOW--AS THE CITY RETURNS TO THE **SEA**--

"--AND ALL LIFE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD--**ENDS**!"

BUT WE'RE NOT *INTER-ESTED* IN *OUR* FUTURE.

WE'VE GONE FAR ENOUGH *FORWARD* THROUGH TIME--

NOW, WE HAVE TO MOVE *SIDEWAYS*-- THROUGH THE *ALTERNATE FUTURES!*

THIS IS OUR FUTURE, THE FUTURE OF OUR *OWN* TIME-LINE--

--AND WHAT WE'RE PASSING NOW--IS THE FUTURE OF THE FEMIZONS, *THUNDRA'S* TIMELINE!

BUT WE CAN'T STOP UNTIL WE REACH *MACHUS*--

--AND WE'VE *REACHED* THAT FUTURE-WORLD, DOMINATED BY *MEN*--

NOW!

NICE GOING, REED. THIS IS MAHKIZMO'S WORLD, ALL RIGHT.

SEE THOSE *TOWERS* UP AHEAD? THAT MUST BE ONE OF THE *MAIN CITIES*--MAYBE EVEN *MAHKIZMO'S!*

WELL, DON'T JUST *STAND* THERE, TORCHIE-- *FLAME ON,* AND FIND OUT!

OKAY, BRICK-FACE, I *WILL.*

THE WAY I SEE IT, I'VE GOT A *SCORE* TO SETTLE WITH THAT MAHKIZMO GUY--AND I MIGHT AS WELL *START* SETTLING NOW!

BE *CAREFUL,* SON. THOSE MEN ARE *DANGEROUS!*

SO ARE *WE,* BROTHER-IN-LAW!

SO ARE WE!

THOSE BRAVE WORDS SEEM TO CATCH IN JOHNNY STORM'S THROAT A MOMENT LATER--

--AS HE TOPS A RISE--AND FINDS HIMSELF A WITNESS TO A SCENE OF BRUTALITY HE WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED POSSIBLE--

--HAD SEEN IT WITH HIS OWN EYES!

OKAY, CHUMS--ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

I'VE HEARD OF MALE DOMINATION BEFORE--

BUT THIS MAKES HUGH HEFNER LOOK LIKE A CHARTER MEMBER OF WOMEN'S LIB!

IT'S ONE OF THOSE FEMALE-LOVING PUPS MAHKIZMO TOLD US ABOUT, GAGNOR!

WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S DARED DISTURB THE HUNT!

AND FOR THAT--

YEAH, YEAH--I KNOW!

"FOR THAT--HE MUST DIE!"

WHY DON'T YOU GUYS GROW UP?

BLAT!

BEN! MEDUSA! JOHNNY NEEDS OUR AID--HE CAN'T POSSIBLY FIGHT THAT MOB ALONE!

SPLIT UP--BOTH OF YOU TAKE A FLANK--

I'LL JOIN JOHNNY IN FRONT!

THAT SUITS ME **FINE**, STRETCHO! I'VE BEEN ACHIN' TA GET MY **MITTS** ON ONE'A THESE CREEPS SINCE I FIRST **HEARD** OF EM--

FAK

SPOOM!

SPAK!

SURPRISINGLY, THE FIGHT GOES **SMOOTHLY**--AND THE ODDS QUICKLY **TILT** IN OUR HEROES' FAVOR--

BAP!

KROW!

--PROVING THE AGE-OLD ADAGE ABOUT BARKS BEING WORSE THAN **BITES**--

--**ESPECIALLY** WHEN THE FAMED **MALE EGO** IS INVOLVED!

BUT THEN, ABRUPTLY, THE TIDE **TURNS.**

THERE'S A BURST OF BLINDING **LIGHT**--

--AND AN ALL-TOO FAMILIAR **FIGURE** APPEARS ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE--GRINNING LIKE A CONQUEROR **BORN!**

YOU! I'VE BEEN **LOOKIN'** FER YOU, FAT-HEAD! JUST HOLD THAT **POSE**--

I WANNA REMEMBER YOU JUST AS YA **ARE!**

YOU ARROGANT CHILD! HAVEN'T YOU REALIZED YET--YOU'RE AS HELPLESS AGAINST ME AS A WEANING BABE!

IF YOU WERE A WOMAN, I COULD UNDERSTAND YOUR BRAINLESS STUPIDITY--

BUT YOU'RE A MAN--AND THAT MAKES YOU SIMPLY A FOOL!

THE NEANDERTHALIC MAN CALLED MAHKIZMO BATTERS THE THING ASIDE SEEMINGLY WITHOUT EFFORT, AND THEN CASTS ABOUT FOR A NEW FOE--

--AND FINDS ONE...A FLAMING MAD HUMAN TORCH, WHO IGNORES MAHKIZMO'S UNDERLINGS AND FLIES STRAIGHT FOR THEIR LEADER!

WAIT, JOHNNY!!

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO ATTACK MAHKIZMO BLINDLY!

ALAS, JOHNNY DOES NOT HEED THE URGENT WARNING.

WHAM!

AND DEEPLY REGRETS IT!

REED, LOOK OUT!

MAHKIZMO'S COMING UP BEHIND YOU-- HE'S MOVING SO QUICKLY, IF YOU DON'T STRETCH OUT OF HIS WAY, HE'LL--

TOO LATE, MEDUSA!

BAMM!

BOTH FOR REED RICHARDS, KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS BY A SINGLE BLOW--

--AND NOW FOR YOU, STUN-BLASTED FROM BEHIND.

FOR BOTH OF YOU, IT'S TOO LATE.

EEEEEEEE

WHA-? DID YA HEAR THAT? THAT WUZ MEDUSA--

THOSE BUMS SHOT MEDUSA!

GROGGY, STILL REELING FROM BEING THROWN, BEN GRIMM CAN BARELY HAUL HIMSELF UPRIGHT--

--BUT HE DOES--

OH, YES HE DOES, INDEED!

BADABABOOM!

BACK OFF, BOZOS--IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

STAND WHERE YOU ARE, MANLING!

SURRENDER-- OR YOUR FRIEND DIES!

LOOKS LIKE YA AINT GIVIN' ME MUCH *CHOICE*, MAC.

FUNNY, AINT IT.? YA CAN HAVE ALL THE POWER IN THE *WORLD*-- AND IT ENDS UP MEANIN' *NUTHIN'*--

NUTHIN' AT *ALL*.

WEAKLING. NO TRUE MAN WOULD HAVE GIVEN IN SO *EASILY*--

NOT FOR THE LIFE OF A HELPLESS *FRIEND*.

TAKE THEM TO THE *CITY*. THEY CAN JOIN THE FEMALE, *THUNDRA*.

WE'LL DECIDE WHAT TO *DO* WITH THEM, *THEN*.

STRANGELY ACQUIESCENT, THE DEFEATED HEROES ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE USHERED ALONG THE STREETS AND ALLEYS OF THE GLOOMY CITY-STATE...

...AND NOT *ONE* OF THEM SAYS A WORD, UNTIL...

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* IT.! IT JUST ISN'T *POSSIBLE*!

IT *IS* POSSIBLE, REED. BUT THE *IMPLICATIONS*--!

IF THEY CAN CRUSH *HER* WILL--WHAT CAN THEY DO TO *US*.?

REED RICHARDS IS TOO **STUNNED** TO REPLY--AND MEDUSA DOESN'T **REPEAT** HER QUESTION.

THE FOUR OF THEM CAN ONLY **STARE**--AT A THUNDRA WHO SEEMS TOTALLY **SUBSERVIANT**--TOTALLY **BROKEN**--

--AND FOR **ONE** OF THE FABULOUS FOURSOME--THE SIGHT IS JUST TOO MUCH TO **BEAR!**

SPANG!

THAT DOES IT!

YOU GUYS JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TA TREAT A **LADY!**

WEAK-KNEED WHELP!

BLAK!

YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN A **WOMAN**--UPSET BY THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF **VIOLENCE!** THERE'S A **PLACE** FOR YOU--**IN A NURSERY!**

*FOR ONE INCREDIBLY TENSE MOMENT, THE THING SEEMS READY TO **CHARGE** THE BLUSTERING MAHKIZMO...THEN, A SUBTLE **CHANGE** COMES OVER HIM...OVER **ALL** OF THEM...*

RESISTANCE IS **USELESS,** BEN. THEY HAVE SOME SORT OF **RAY**--/

IT SAPS THE **WILL**--MAKING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO **ACT!**

FACE IT, BROTHER-IN-LAW:

THIS TIME--WE'VE **HAD** IT!

PUT THOSE PUPS IN A **STASIS-CAGE.**

TOMORROW--OR PERHAPS THE DAY **AFTER**--WE'LL DISPOSE OF THEM IN THE **ARENA.**

AS FOR THEIR **WOMAN,** THE **RED-HAIRED** WENCH...

TONIGHT, SHE STAYS WITH **ME.**

AND SO, AS THE GRAY-GREEN SKY OF MACHUS DARKENS WITH EARLY DUSK, SOFT WORDS ARE SPOKEN IN THE PALACE CHAMBER OF THE MIGHTY MAHKIZMO...

...GENTLE HANDS CARESS MASSIVE THEWS...

...AND MEANINGFUL SMILES ARE GIVEN AND RETURNED.

OF COURSE, MEANINGFUL SMILES CAN HAVE MANY "MEANINGS"...

...SOME A LITTLE MORE IRONIC THAN OTHERS.

CRASH!

UGH. AFTER THAT, I NEED A BATH.

FOOTSTEPS RING THROUGH THE DESERTED PALACE, FADING AS THE SCARLET-TRESSED INHUMAN REACHES AN OPEN COURT--STEPS OUT--AND HALTS, GASPING IN STUNNED AMAZEMENT!

MEDUSA! THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE FREE! WE THOUGHT --BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT, NOW.

YOU'D BETTER FIND SOME WAY TO RELEASE US QUICKLY--SOMEONE COULD COME ALONG AT ANY MOMENT!

REED... I'M SORRY... BUT I CAN'T.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THERE ISN'T TIME TO EXPLAIN.

BELIEVE ME, I'M SORRY.

BELIEVE YOU?

GET BACK HERE, YOU CRAZY BROAD! YA HEAR ME?

GET BACK HERE!

BEN'S ANGRY CRIES ARE SOON LOST IN THE DISTANCE.

WITHOUT PAUSE OR HESITATION, MEDUSA RUNS ON, UNTIL THE CITY OF MACHUS IS ONLY A BLOT ON THE FAR HORIZON...

...AND SHE FINDS BEFORE HER...

REED'S CROSS-TIME DEVICE!

I HOPE I CAN MAKE IT WORK. I ONLY SAW REED USE IT ONCE--

--AND THERE ISN'T TIME TO HAVE HIM GIVE ME A CRASH COURSE!

TIME-- TIME IS THE ANSWER--

I CAN ONLY PRAY THAT TIME'S ANSWER IS THE RIGHT ONE!

DID YA SEE THAT? SHE RAN OUT ON US! WHEN WE NEEDED HER MOST--

--MEDUSA TURNED TRAITOR!

SO IT WOULD APPEAR.

BUT, AS THE MAN SAID, "APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING".

SPECIAL NOTE TO ALL YOU SHARP-EYED MARVELITES: IF THE ART LOOKS SLIGHTLY RUSHED THIS ISH, IT'S ONLY BECAUSE THERE ALMOST WASN'T A ONE-HUNDRED-AND-FIFTY-SECOND ISSUE OF OUR FABULOUS FOURSOME. JIM MOONEY SAVED US AT THE LAST MINUTE! THANKS, JIM! NEXT ISH: JOE SINNOTT IS BACK WHEN THE **FEMIZONS STRIKE!**

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

WORLDS IN COLLISION!

WE CAN'T STOP HIM FROM *EXPLODING*-- AND WHEN MAHKIZMO DIES, A *UNIVERSE* DIES WITH HIM!

THE MENACE OF MAHKIZMO THE NUCLEAR MAN!

THE CATACLYSMIC CLIMAX OF THE MIGHTIEST F.F. SAGA EVER!!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

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"WORLDS IN COLLISION!"

BEN--TAKE IT *EASY!*

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *SAYING!*

I *KNOW* AWRIGHT, STRETCHO. IT'S JUST THAT YOU WON'T *ADMIT* IT!

MEDUSA'S RUN OUT ON US!

SHE'S TURNED TRAITOR!

AND SO IT WOULD APPEAR, MACDUFF, FOR THE SCARLET-TRESSED INHUMAN HAS IN *FACT* LEFT HER ERSTWHILE TEAMMATES TRAPPED ON THE MAHKIZMO-DOMINATED WORLD OF *MACHUS.*

BUT APPEARANCES *CAN* BE DECEIVING, FRIEND. SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST SIT BACK AND FOLLOW THE FLAMING ARROW TO...

ACTION!

THAT CRAZY BROAD LEFT US HERE TO *DIE* IN THIS CRUMMY "STATIS CAGE" OF MAHKIZMO'S!

WELL, BEN GRIMM DON'T DIE SO *EASY!*

BEN, *WAIT!* YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND!*

WHAT'S THERE TO UNDER--

YEEOWW!

ZAPSSTT!

I TRIED TO *WARN* YOU, BEN. THIS IS A *STATIS* CAGE. WE'RE ALL FUNCTIONING MUCH *SLOWER* THAN NORMALLY.

OUR BREATHING, OUR CIRCULATION --EVEN OUR *TALKING!*

THE FORCE OF YOUR BLOW TRAVELED THROUGH THE BARS SO *SLOWLY*, THE AUTOMATIC DEFENSES WERE ABLE TO CUT IN.

REED...

YES, BEN?

SHADDUP.

THIS IS NO TIME FOR *JOKING*, OLD FRIEND-- THERE'S TOO *MUCH* AT STAKE.

THE MALE-DOMINATED WORLD OF *MACHUS* AND THE WORLD OF THE *FEMIZONS* ARE MOVING TOGETHER.

THE RESULTING *COLLISION* COULD DESTROY *ALL* THE ALTERNATE WORLDS--INCLUDING *OUR EARTH!*

REED, DO YOU SUPPOSE MEDUSA--WITH HER INHUMAN SCIENTIFIC TRAINING--*KNEW* THAT... AND THAT THIS CAGE WAS SLOWING US DOWN.

MAYBE *THAT'S* WHY SHE COULDN'T STOP TO FREE US. THERE JUST WASN'T ENOUGH *TIME.*

THAT'S A *DISTINCT* POSSIBILITY, SON.

SHE PROBABLY ALSO FIGURED WE COULD FREE *OURSELVES.*

SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD *CUE* TO ME, LEADER-MAN.

FLAME ON!

MAYBE THIS CAGE SLOWED DOWN BEN'S *PUNCH*--

--BUT A *FLAME BLAST* SHOULD BE SOMETHING ELSE *ENTIRELY!*

SWOOTCH!

HE'S *COLLAPSING!*

IT SUCKED ALL THE ENERGY *OUT* OF ME, REED--LIKE A *SPONGE!*

FORCE MOVES TOO *SLOWLY.* WE'VE GOT TO TRY A *DIFFERENT* APPROACH!

JOHNNY-- CONCENTRATE YOUR *HEAT* ON THE BARS OF THE CAGE.

UNLIKE FLAME, IT WON'T *MATTER* IF THE HEAT TRAVELS SLOWLY. IF THE SOURCE OF THE HEAT REMAINS *CONSTANT,* THE DEGREE OF THE HEAT WILL CONTINUE TO *RISE.*

IF YOU CAN MELT THE *BOLT* HOLDING THE CAGE...

YOU *GOT* IT, REED.

I'LL KEEP THE HEAT COMING IF IT *KILLS* ME!

IN THE STATIS CAGE, *TIME*--IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING--TAKES LONGER. SO THOUGH JOHNNY RADIATES HEAT FOR *MINUTES*--

--TO HIM IT IS LIKE *HOURS* OF EFFORT!

UNTIL...

FRAK!

THE CAGE *DROPS*...

TORCHY, I LOVE YA! WE'RE *FREE!*

KRASH!

...INTO THE FRYING PAN *AND* THE FIRE!

HALT, WHELPS!

REED, IT'S UP TO YOU AND BEN. I'M TOO *EXHAUSTED* TO FIGHT THESE GUARDS!

INSOLENT PUP! DO YOU THINK WE'D GIVE YOU EVEN A *CHANCE* TO FIGHT BACK?

YA BUMS! IF YA'D GIVEN ME THE CHANCE, I'D A =GAH= MOPPED UP THE FLOOR WIT ALLA YA!

FOOSH!

JUST A... =COUGH= CHANCE...

GAS THEM!

GOOD *NIGHT*, BEN.

THE *WAKE-UP CALL* COMES A FEW HOURS LATER.

RISE, CURS--AND HEAR YOUR *FATE!*

WHA--WHAT *IS* IT?

SHEESH! I COULDA COME UP WITH A LINE LIKE *THAT.*

YOU *QUIETIN' DOWN* IN YER OLD AGE, REED?

WE'RE IN SOME *KIND* OF...

REED, *LOOK!*

HOW COULD HE DO THAT TO *HER*?!

HOW COULD *ANYBODY* DO THAT TO...

...THUNDRA!

YET THERE SHE *STANDS*... THE HELPLESS, CHAINED *CAPTIVE* OF MAHKIZMO.

MAHKIZMO: A.K.A. THE NUCLEAR MAN AND RULER OF THIS MAD WORLD OF *MACHUS*.

THIS IS HIS *COURTROOM*.

YOU'VE BECOME A MATTER OF CONCERN TO THE *COUNCIL* OF MACHUS, MALE-LINGS... ESPECIALLY SINCE THE RED-HAIRED WITCH *ESCAPED* MY CHAMBERS THIS NIGHT LAST.

MY *ADVISORS* FEEL THAT IF WOMEN HAVE REACHED THAT DEGREE OF *COMPETENCE* ON YOUR WORLD, IT IS BECAUSE YOU MEN HAVE BEEN *WEAK* ENOUGH FOR THEM TO DO SO.

WEAK MEN ARE *KILLED* HERE.

YOU OVERSTUFFED *JOCK!* YA THINK YA CAN FINISH OFF THE F.F.? MY AUNT PETUNIA COULD TAKE YA ON AND SPOT YA FIFTY POUNDS TO *BOOT!*

DON'T ANGER HIM, BEN. *EONS* OF UNTHINKING DOMINATION HAVE REDUCED MOST OF MACHUS' POPULATION TO FANATICS.

WITH NO ONE TO OFFER THEM AN OPPOSING VIEWPOINT IN CENTURIES, THEY'VE *STAGNATED MENTALLY*.

HE'S ABOUT TO SPEAK AGAIN. MAYBE THE BIG CHEESE *HIMSELF* WILL GIVE US A CLUE TO *BEATING* HIM.

OUR *MIND-PROBES* HAVE LEARNED FROM THUNDRA THAT OUR WORLD EVEN NOW MERGES WITH HERS.

WE *WELCOME* NEW BLOOD INTO OUR BREEDING STABLES AND SCULLERIES.

WE WILL, OF COURSE, DEFEAT THE FEMIZONS *EASILY*--

--AND THEN MACHUS... AND I... WILL RULE OVER *ALL!*

REED, HE'S *FLIPPED!*

IT'S AS IF HE WERE SHOUTING TO CONVINCE *HIMSELF*... AS IF HE WASN'T SURE OF HIS *OWN POWER!*

WHICH MAKES THE PERFECT TIME TO--

STRIKE!

FOOL! YOUR TIME IN THE STATIS CAGE STILL AFFECTS YOU--IF ONLY *SLIGHTLY!*

TOWER-- DIRECT THE DOMINA-RAY ON THE DOGS!

REED, WHAT IS IT? I DON'T FEEL LIKE *CLOBBERIN'* ANYBODY ANY MORE.

IT'S SOME SORT OF *RAY*--BUT WHERE IS IT COMING FROM?

IT'S SAPPING OUR WILL TO *FIGHT!*

TAKE THEM TO THE *ARENA.*

THAT'S HOW HE WAS ABLE TO DEFEAT US SO *EASILY* BEFORE.*

LAST ISH-- ROY.

HE PROBABLY HAD A *PORTABLE* VERSION OF THIS THING AT THE BAXTER BUILDING, TOO!

SO WE KNOW HIS *SECRET.* WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO US IF WE'RE HELPLESS TO PUT THE KNOWLEDGE TO *USE?*

YOU WILL *JOIN* THEM IN THE ARENA, MY DEAR--

--UNLESS YOU PREFER TO DO YOUR BATTLING IN MY *PRIVATE* BEDCHAMBERS.

I WOULD SOONER GO WITH A MUTATED *BLOOD-SLUG!*

INSOLENT WENCH! THEN JOIN YOUR FRIENDS!

JOIN THEM IN DEATH!

NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY ANYBODY'D PUSH *THAT* LADY AROUND.

THUNDRA, ARE YOU...?

I AM *FINE*, BEN GRIMM... NOW THAT I AM AMONG GOOD FRIENDS ONCE MORE.

HEY, IT LOOKS LIKE MR. UNIVERSE HAS SOMETHIN' TO SAY.

"IN THE NAME OF THE UNIVERSAL ORDER OF MANHOOD, I SENTENCE YOU TO *DEATH BY COMBAT!*"

"RELEASE THE *THREE-WHO-WAIT!*"

HEADS UP, TEAM. THE DOOR AT THE FAR END OF THE ARENA IS *OPENING!*

THERE HAVE BEEN *GREATER* ASSEMBLAGES OF RAW POWER. BUT *NO* TEAM OF SUPER-BEINGS HAS EVER FACED A MENACE AS *GRAVE* AS THIS BEFORE.

THOUGH THEIR VERY *WILL* TO FIGHT HAS BEEN SAPPED, THEY STAND *READY*...

...READY TO *BATTLE*...

...TO SAVE AN *INFINITY* OF ALTERNATE WORLDS!

PRAY FOR THEM.

THEY MAY *DIE* HERE.

GOOD LORD!

HAVE WE GOT A *BRAWL* ON OUR HANDS!

SAY 'EM, BEN-- THOSE THREE LITTLE *WORDS*...

YA CAN'T JUST *SAY* 'EM, TORCHY. YA GOTTA BUILD UP TO THE RIGHT PHILOSOPHICAL *MOMENT!*

AND *THEN* WHAT?

AND THEN--

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

STUMP!

C'MERE, YA REFUGEE FROM *WHERE MONSTERS DWELL*--

UNCLE BENJY'S GONNA TAKE YA FOR A *RIDE!*

HEY, THUNDRA! GIVE REED A *HAND!* IT LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THESE BEAUTIES IS GIVIN' HIM TROUBLE!

WHUMP!

OF COURSE, NOW THAT I'VE *SET UP* OUR LITTLE BUDDY, I WOULDN'T OBJECT TO THE LADY LENDING A *FIST* OR *TWO*.

THANKS FOR THE *CONCERN*, OLD FRIEND.

BUT THEY DON'T CALL ME *MR. FANTASTIC* BECAUSE OF MY *SMILE!*

IN ALL *FAIRNESS* TO THE BEAST YOU HOLD, REED RICHARDS--

I THINK ONE BLOW WILL BE SUFFICIENT!

KLA-POW!

AWRIGHT, MAHKIZMO! WE TOOK YER *BEST SHOTS!*

HOW'S ABOUT *YOU* COMIN' DOWN HERE?!

I'M AFRAID THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE*, DOG--

--UNTIL YOU DEFEAT THE *DEADLIEST* CREATURE IN MY MENAGERIE--

"--THE RAMPAGER!"

WOP!

BUT YA SAID THERE WUZ ONLY THREE... *UHN!*

"I *LIED*, WHELP. AND NOW, WITHOUT *YOUR* POWER--

"--YOUR TEAMMATES ARE *DOOMED!*"

REED! GET BEN OUT OF HERE! I'LL TRY TO HOLD THIS MONSTER *OFF!*

MAHKIZMO, YOU WILL *PAY* FOR THIS!

STAY *BACK*, THUNDRA!

JOHNNY--AS SOON AS I GET BEN *CLEAR*--

--USE YOUR *NOVA-BLAST!*

WHEW! OKAY, REED--IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT IT!

JUST PRAY I DON'T TAKE OUT THIS WHOLE *ARENA!*

THE RAMPAGER SCREAMS *ONE* SOUNDLESS SCREAM.

FWOOSH!

IT *DIES.*

WHICH ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING MORE THAN TO BRING MAHKIZMO, THE *NUCLEAR MAN,* INTO THE FRAY.

IN CENTURIES, NO ONE HAS ESCAPED *JUSTICE* IN THIS ARENA. NOR SHALL YOU FOUR BE THE *FIRST!*

EVEN IF I HAVE TO KILL YOU *MYSELF!*

THE WORDS OF A *MADMAN*? YES. BUT ON MACHUS, A MADMAN *RULES!*

REED, HE'S USING THAT BLASTED *RAY* AGAIN! I JUST CAN'T GET UP THE WILL TO DEFEND-- *UHNN!*

SLOMP!

YA CRUMMY *COWARD!* YA DON'T HAVE THE *NERVE* TO COME AFTER US *WITHOUT* THAT RAY SAPPIN' OUR WILL TO CLOBBER YA!

NO MAN CALLS MAHKIZMO A COWARD!

IF THE SHOE FITS, BLUE-EYES--

SWALLOW IT!

WITH THOSE BRASH WORDS, MAN-LING--

KRAK!

--YOU HAVE SEALED YOUR FATE!

EVER BEEN CAUGHT IN A *NUCLEAR BOMB BLAST?*

IF SO, YOU CAN APPRECIATE THE EFFECT MAHKIZMO'S ***POWER PUNCH*** IS HAVING ON OUR QUARRELSOME QUARTET.

IF ***NOT***, SUFFICE TO SAY...

...THEY'RE HURTING!

LET *THIS* BE YOUR LAST THOUGHT, FOOLS--

MAHKIZMO RULES SUPREME!

AND THEN (IN TRIED-AND-TRUE ADVENTURE FICTION TRADITION) ...

...THE CAVALRY ARRIVES!

FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING.

WE STRIKE FOR THE SISTERHOOD!

THE FEMIZONS! THEY'VE FOUND US!

BUT *THEY'LL* BE AFFECTED BY THE DOMINA-RAY, *TOO!*

AN' THAT MEANS MAHKIZMO'LL CLOBBER 'EM!

PLOW!

YER NOT GETTIN' AWAY WITH THAT, CRUMB-BUM--

--NOT WHILE THE THING'S AROUND!

I *HAVE* "GOTTEN AWAY" WITH IT, PRE-MAN--

--SINCE YOU CAN NO *LONGER* RAISE A HAND AGAINST ME!

YA CREEP! TURN OFF THAT BLAMED RAY FOR JEST *TEN SECONDS!*

JEST TEN LOUSY *SECONDS!*

REED, THERE'S AN *ARMY* OF MAHKIZMO'S GUARDS COMING ON *FAST!* AND I CAN BARELY *FLAME ON!*

CONSERVE YOUR STRENGTH, JOHNNY. YOU'LL NEED IT FOR A FAR MORE *IMPORTANT* MISSION THAN BATTLING LACKEYS.

YOU HIT IT ON THE *NOSE*, MEDUSA. BECAUSE I THINK I'VE SPOTTED THE *SOURCE* OF THE RAY. CAN YOU...

HOLD OFF THESE CHAUVINIST PIGS? *OF COURSE.*

AS YOU HAVE DOUBTLESS ALREADY DEDUCED, MY INHUMAN HERITAGE HAS MADE ME *IMMUNE* TO MAHKIZMO'S RAY. *

*WHICH EXPLAINS HOW OUR LONG-HAIRED LADY WAS ABLE TO *ESCAPE* FROM OL' HAIRY ARM-PITS LAST ISSUE, RIGHT? --R.T.

OKAY, JOHNNY...

MOVE!

FLAME ON!

YEAH, DO THAT, KID. WHILE I FIND ME A SPARRIN' PARTNER FOR OUR LAST TANGLE IN *MACHUS!*

THE RAY'S SET ON A *GENERAL* SETTING AND AIMED AT THE *ARENA* BELOW!

BY THE TIME MAHKIZMO FIGURES OUT WHAT'S GOING ON AND ORDERS HIS MEN TO FOCUS ON *ME*--

--THERE WON'T BE A RAY TO FOCUS!

FOOM!

YOU TRY MY PATIENCE *AGAIN*, WHELP? HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE!

YEAH, I'M JEST A COCK-EYED *OPTIMIST*--

--AND YER JEST PLAIN *COCK-EYED!*

WHAMMO!

HOO-BOY, THAT FELT *GOOD!*

THUNDRA!

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO *STAY* MY HAND, REED RICHARDS.

BEN GRIMM FIGHTS FOR *MY* SEX--

--AND HE SHALL NOT FIGHT ALONE!

REED, WHAT'S THAT *GLOW* AROUND HIM?

STAY BACK, BEN. HE'S GETTING READY TO USE HIS *NUCLEAR POWER-PUNCH* AGAIN!

AYE, DOG--

--AND THIS TIME--

--IT SHALL DESTROY A WORLD!

NOT IF YOU FAIL TO *USE* IT!

YOU *CALLED* IT, LADY!

STRIKE BEN GRIMM!

FWAMM!

BY THE *SISTERHOOD!*

THA-BOOM!

HE'S EXPLODIN'!

AND, WITH THE *DEATH* OF MAHKIZMO...

...*A WORLD IS TORN ASUNDER!*

STRETCHO, WHAT'S GOIN'*ON*?

THE CONTAINED NUCLEAR EXPLOSION...IT'S CREATED SUFFICIENT *ENERGY* TO MERGE *MACHUS* AND THE WORLD OF *FEMIZONS*--

--*WITHOUT* DISRUPTING THE OTHER ALTERNATE WORLDS!

OUR TWO WORLDS WILL BE AT WAR *FOREVER!*

I DON'T *THINK* SO, THUNDRA.

THE KID'S RIGHT, THUNDRA. LOOK.

"ONE OF MACHUS' BRUISERS IS ABOUT TO *SLUG* ONE OF MACHUS' WIMMEN...

"...BUT SHE AIN'T TAKIN' IT ANY *MORE!*

SLAP!

"LOOK AT YER OWN PEOPLE. THEY AIN'T FIGHTIN' WITH MEN ANY MORE.

"...AN' MORE THAN TALKIN'!"

"THE MERGER IS NEARLY COMPLETED, BEN."

WHERE THERE WERE *TWO* WORLDS WITH A DIFFERENT SEX RULING EACH--

--NOW THERE'S ONLY *ONE*... WITH TWO *EQUAL* SEXES!

"THEY'RE *TALKIN'*...

REED, WE'RE STARTING TO FADE *AWAY!*

"THE NATURAL FORCES OF *BALANCE* ARE TAKING OVER. ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T *BELONG* TO THIS *NEW* WORLD--

"--IS BEING DRAWN BACK TO ITS *OWN* WORLD!"

WE'RE BACK ON *EARTH*! ALL OF US!

INCLUDING *THUNDRA*!

HOW IS THIS *POSSIBLE*?

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T *EXPLAIN* IT, THUNDRA.

BUT *I* CAN.

THE NATURAL FORCES PROBABLY DECIDED THAT THUNDRA BELONGED ON A WORLD WHERE THE SEXES ARE EQUAL BY *CHOICE*--

--NOT BECAUSE TWO WORLDS WERE *FORCED* TOGETHER!

AHHH, THAT'S *MUMBO-JUMBO*, RED.

BUT I'M KINDA *GLAD* THE BIG LADY'LL BE AROUND.

THANK YOU, BEN GRIMM.

THOUGH I HAVE BATTLED YOU IN THE *PAST*--

--YOU ARE THE *KINDEST* MAN I HAVE EVER MET!

SMACK!

ULP!

WHY, BENJAMIN! THOUGH IT'S HARD TO TELL ON THAT ORANGE, LUMPY SKIN OF YOURS, I DO BELIEVE YOU'RE...

DON'T *SAY* IT, STRETCHO. I'M *WARNIN'* YOU--

--DON'T-SAY-IT!

NEXT: *THE MAN IN THE MYSTERY MASK*

FANTASTIC FOUR

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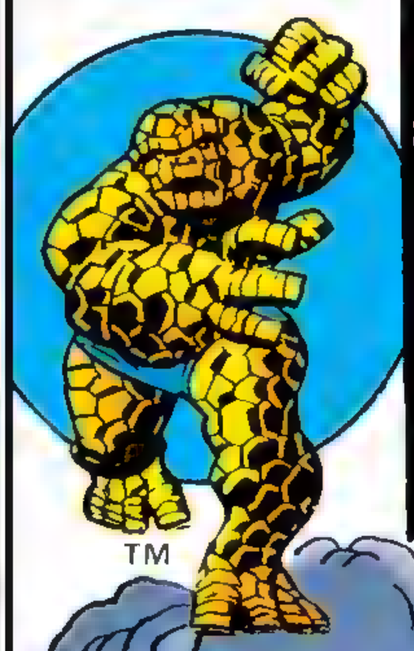

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I DEFEATED YOU ONCE BEFORE--AND THIS TIME I WON'T STOP TILL I'VE DESTROYED YOU!!

THEN GET CRACKIN', MISTER-- 'CAUSE IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

HE'S BACK!!

THE MAN IN THE MYSTERY MASK!

Stan Lee Presents: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

STAN LEE & LEN WEIN * DICK AYERS & BOB BROWN * PAUL REINMAN & FRANK GIACOIA & MIKE ESPOSITO * ARTIE SIMEK * GLYNIS WEIN * ROY THOMAS
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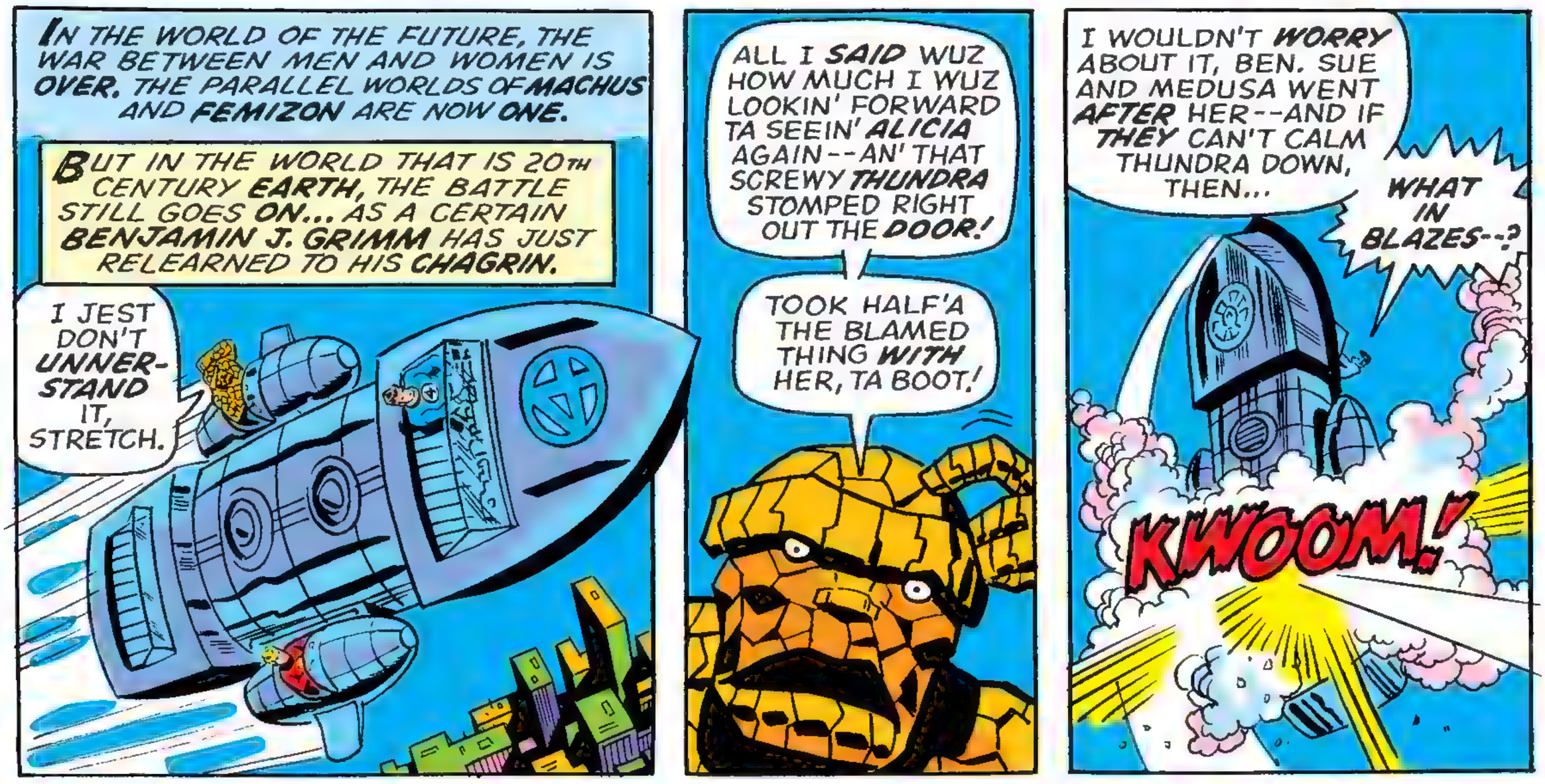
IN THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE, THE WAR BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IS OVER. THE PARALLEL WORLDS OF MACHUS AND FEMIZON ARE NOW ONE.
BUT IN THE WORLD THAT IS 20TH CENTURY EARTH, THE BATTLE STILL GOES ON... AS A CERTAIN BENJAMIN J. GRIMM HAS JUST RELEARNED TO HIS CHAGRIN.
I JEST DON'T UNNER-STAND IT, STRETCH.
ALL I SAID WUZ HOW MUCH I WUZ LOOKIN' FORWARD TA SEEIN' ALICIA AGAIN--AN' THAT SCREWY THUNDRA STOMPED RIGHT OUT THE DOOR!
TOOK HALF'A THE BLAMED THING WITH HER, TA BOOT!
I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BEN. SUE AND MEDUSA WENT AFTER HER--AND IF THEY CAN'T CALM THUNDRA DOWN, THEN...
WHAT IN BLAZES--?
KWOOM!

THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THE UNEXPECTED, THESE THREE--THUS, AS THE STRICKEN FANTASTI-CAR BEGINS ITS GROUNDWARD PLUNGE, THEY DESPERATELY SCAN THE EVENING SKY FOR SOME SMALL SIGN OF THEIR UNKNOWN ATTACKER--
--AND THEY ARE MORE THAN STUNNED BY WHAT THEY FIND!
IMPOSSIBLE! OF ALL THE FOES WE'VE EVER FOUGHT --IT COULDN'T BE--HIM!?!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
THE MAN IN THE MYSTERY MASK!

The Fantastic Four #154 reprinted the Human Torch story from *Strange Tales* #127 framed by the following two-page prologue and six-page epilogue.

C'MON, REED--WILL YA PULL US *OUTTA* THIS MESS?

I'M *TRYING,* BEN--BUT IT'S *NO USE!* THAT RAY-BLAST HAS *JAMMED* THE *CONTROLS!*

IT'S *UNREAL!* WHO'D EVER HAVE THOUGHT WE'D BE *WASTED* BY AN ENEMY WHO DOESN'T EVEN *EXIST?*

WITH THAT THE MIND OF JOHNNY STORM REELS *BACK* FOR AN INSTANT--RECALLING THE DAY HE'D *FIRST* MET THIS MAN IN THE *MYSTERY* MASK...

HE'D BEEN FLYING *THEN,* TOO--ENGAGED IN WHAT, FOR THE FABULOUS *FANTASTIC FOUR,* WAS MERELY AN AFTERNOON'S *ENTERTAINMENT*--THE FIRST *AERIAL DRAG-RACE* ON RECORD--*

WATCH YOURSELF, JOHNNY! YOU'RE USING TOO MUCH FLAME POWER! YOU'LL NEVER REACH THE FINISH LINE!

YOU'RE JUST SCARED I'M GONNA *BEAT* YOU, REED! WATCH MY SMOKE *NOW!*

HOW COME I ALWAYS GET STUCK WITH THE SLOWEST CRATE! LOSIN' A RACE CAN GIVE A SENSITIVE GUY LIKE ME A *COMPLEX!*

*JOHNNY'S **AWESOME FLASHBACK,** REMEMBERED TO ITS MINUTEST DETAIL AS ORIGINALLY PRESENTED IN **STRANGE TALES #127.** YA GOTTA ADMIT, THAT'S **SOME MEMORY** THAT LAD HAS. -- ROY.

"AND JOHNNY STORM ABANDONS HIS MEMORIES FOR A FAR MORE INCREDIBLE REALITY.

REED, IF YOU'RE NOT BEHIND THAT QUESTION-MARK THIS TIME, WHO IS?

WE CAN WORRY ABOUT THAT PROBLEM WHEN WE'RE THRU WORRYING ABOUT THIS ONE, JOHNNY.

THAT BAD, HUH, STRETCH? AINT THERE NOTHIN' YA CAN DO?

I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING, BEN--BUT I STILL CAN'T LOOSEN THESE CURSED CONTROLS!

SHEESH! IF THAT'S ALL THAT'S HOLDIN' THINGS UP, HIGH-POCKETS--JEST STEP ASIDE AN' LET AN EXPERT TAKE A HAND.

'CAUSE WHEN IT COMES TA LOOSENIN' STUFF UP--

--YERS TROOLY IS IN A CLASS BY HISSELF!

SKRUMP!

YOU'VE DONE IT, BEN! NOW JUST PRAY I CAN JURY-RIG WHAT'S LEFT OF THE CONTROLS IN TIME!

I'M PRAYIN'... I'M PRAYIN', ALREADY...

BUT IT IS THE REMARKABLE SKILL AND STAMINA OF A CERTAIN REED RICHARDS, NOT ANY SWIFTLY-MUTTERED PRAYERS, THAT PULLS THE FANTASTI-CAR OUT OF ITS DEATH-PLUNGE, WITH LESS THAN AN INSTANT TO SPARE.

SONUVAGUN, STRETCH-- YA REALLY PULLED IT OFF!

SKREEE-WHUMP!

BUT I'D NEVER HAVE SUCCEEDED WITHOUT YOUR HELP, OLD FRIEND.

AN IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF *TEAMWORK*, FOOLS--BUT YOU ONLY DELAY THE *INEVITABLE!*

BEFORE THIS DAY IS *OVER*, I HAVE SWORN TO *DESTROY* YOU ALL!

LOOK--I DON'T KNOW WHAT *WHODUNIT* YOU ESCAPED FROM, BUSTER-- AND I DON'T REALLY *CARE*--

--BUT IF THERE'S ANY *DESTROYING* TO BE DONE AROUND HERE--*WE'RE* THE ONES WHO'LL *DO* IT!

FLAME ON!

COME *AHEAD* THEN-- *CHALLENGE* ME IF YOU DARE--

--BUT I PROMISE YOU *WON'T* LIVE TO *REGRET* IT!

MISTER, YOU'RE REALLY *ASKING* FOR IT--

--AND THE *HUMAN TORCH* IS JUST THE GUY TO *GIVE* IT TO YOU!

YOU *THINK* SO, DO YOU, CLOWN?

THEN YOU'RE A *GREATER* FOOL THAN EVEN *I* COULD HAVE BELIEVED POSSIBLE!

WATCH *CLOSELY*-- OBSERVE HOW *EASILY* I AVOID YOUR BARRAGE OF *FIRE-BALLS!*

HUH?

FAR MORE EASILY THAN *YOU* COULD EVER AVOID--

THIS!

NO! THAT *FOAM* HE'S SPRAYING IS *SMOTHER-ING* MY FLAME--!

FOOMSH!

BUT IF I'M GOING *DOWN*, CHUM--I'M TAKING *YOU* WITH ME!

INCREDIBLE--! YOU'VE *RUINED* MY SKY-SLED!

BUT YOU SHOULD *NOT* HAVE HAD *STRENGTH* ENOUGH TO *DO* THAT!

YEAH--ISN'T LIFE JUST *FULL* OF LITTLE *SURPRIZES?*

HUH?

RELAX, JOHNNY-- I'VE GOT YOU *BOTH!*

WRONG, RICHARDS! YOU MAY HAVE YOUR ARROGANT YOUNG *BROTHER-IN-LAW--*

--BUT YOU DO NOT HAVE *ME!*

ARRGH!

*OF COURSE THAT'S NOT A PLUG FOR MARVEL'S SPANKING-NEW *HORROR HUMOR* MAG. HOW COULD WE BE *FRIVOLOUS* AT A TIME LIKE THIS? --RT.

OKAY, CREEP-FACE-- THAT *TIES* IT!

YA CAN TRY ZAPPIN' *ME* ANYTIME YA WANNA--BUT WHEN YA START ZAPPIN' MY *BUDDIES--*

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

IT IS *INDEED*, BEN GRIMM!

SPLOW!

IT IS *INDEED!!*

HAHAHAHA

HOLY CROW! THEM LITTLE *MARBLE* GIZMOS ARE TURNIN' INTA ROLLIN' *TANKS--!*

RRRUUUMMBLLLEEEE

BATHOOM!

BUT THE TANK AINT BEEN *BUILT* THAT THE BASH-FUL, BLUE-EYED, EVER-LOVIN' *THING* CAN'T HANDLE!

KWAROOM!

GET MY *POINT*, MAC?

BEN IS HOLDING HIS *OWN*-- BUT THERE ARE JUST *TOO MANY* OF THOSE MURDER-BALLS FOR HIM TO HANDLE *ALONE!*

ONE OF THEM GOT *PAST* HIM--

--SO IT'S UP TO *ME* TO *STOP* IT--

--AND SEND IT *BACK* WHERE IT *BELONGS!*

QUICKLY, BEN-- DUCK!

THWANGG

HEY--NEXT TIME GIVE A GUY A LITTLE *WARNIN'*, WILLYA?

YA NEARLY *PARTED MY HAIR* WITH THAT OVER-SIZED SADDLE-BURR--

'CEPT FER THE FACT THAT I AINT *GOT* NO HAIR!

NOR WILL YOU HAVE A *HEAD* ON WHICH TO *GROW* IT, GRIMM--ONCE I'VE *FINISHED* WITH YOU!

YOU DIDN'T *REALLY* THINK TO DEFEAT ME WITH WEAPONS OF MY OWN *DEVISING* NOW, DID YOU, RICHARDS?

SKAKT!

NUTS! HE JEST TURNED THAT THING INTA SO MUCH *LINT*--!

THAT'S A LITTLE STUNT HE *WON'T* BE TRYING *AGAIN,* BIG BUDDY--

--NOT WITH *THIS* GUN, ANYWAY!

FOOOSH!

MY *MULTI-GUN*-- YOU'VE *DESTROYED* IT--!

AN' THAT'S JEST A *SNEAK PREVIEW* OF WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO TA *YOU,* BOZO!

ASSUMING, OF COURSE, YOU CAN *FIND* ME!

HUH? HE'S THROWIN' UP SOME SORT'A *SMOKE-SCREEN* --AN' *LOSIN'* HIMSELF IN IT!

C'MON OUT AN' *FIGHT,* YA YELLA-BELLIED MEATBALL! JEST LET ME LAY MY *MITTS* ON YA AN' I'LL...

BEN--WAIT! THRASHING WILDLY ABOUT LIKE THAT WON'T ACCOMPLISH *ANYTHING!*

YOU GOT ANY *BETTER* IDEA, STRETCH?

I *HOPE* SO, OLD FRIEND. OUR MYSTERIOUS ADVERSARY *MUST* BE IN HERE *SOMEWHERE*--

--BUT I BELIEVE ONLY SOMEONE WITH THE ELASTIC ABILITY OF *MR. FANTASTIC* CAN *FIND*...

HA! I'VE GOT HIM!

BLAST YOU, RICHARDS-- *LET GO* OF ME!

NOT A *CHANCE,* FRIEND--UNTIL WE *SEE* WHO'S UNDER THAT--

MASK!

HOLY SMOKE--!

AHHH-- I SHOULD'A *GUESSED--!*

OF ALL THE PEOPLE ON EARTH, THE *LAST* PERSON I'D HAVE EXPECTED TO SEE UNDER THAT MASK IS--

NICK FURY, RAMROD OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!*

HAD A *FEELIN'* YOU'D THINK THAT WAY, REED OL' BUDDY--THAT'S WHY I *ARRANGED* THIS!

*IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO **FURY** AND **SHIELD** ARE BY **NOW,** TIGER--FOR **SHAME** ON YOU. --INDIGNANT ROY.

I'M *NOT* IMPRESSED, NICK "OL' BUDDY"--SO SUPPOSE YOU TELL US WHAT THIS AFFAIR WAS ALL *ABOUT?*

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, CHUM--IT WAS *BUSINESS!*

SHIELD *ORDINANCE* JUST FINISHED DEVELOPIN' A WHOLE SLEW OF NEW *WEAPONS*--BUT THEY COULDN'T BE MADE STANDARD ISSUE TILL THEY WERE TESTED *UNDER FIRE!*

I FIGURED ABOUT THE *BEST* TEST WE COULD *GIVE* 'EM WAS TO TEST 'EM AGAINST THE *FANTASTIC FOUR*--SO I DECKED MYSELF OUT IN THAT FREAKY *COSTUME* YOU ONCE USED, REED--AND THE REST YOU *KNOW!*

GOOD THING I *DID,* TOO--THOSE WEAPONS DEFINITELY NEED MORE *WORK!*

YA MEAN YA WUZ JEST USIN' US FER BLASTED *GUINEA PIGS?*

LOOK, BEN--SHIELD'LL *PAY* FOR THE DAMAGE TO YOUR FANTASTI-CAR AND ANYTHING *ELSE* THAT WE...

OH, YOU'LL *PAY* FER IT ALRIGHT, FURY. OH *BOY,* WILL YOU *PAY!*

SORRY, GRIMM--

--BUT THIS LOOKS LIKE ABOUT AS *GOOD* A TIME AS ANY TO TRY OUT SHIELD'S NEW SHORT-RANGE *TELEPORTRON!*

SEE YA IN THE *FUNNY PAPERS,* GANG...

OH NO YA *DON'T* WISE-GUY--!

RATS! THAT SNEAKY SON-OF-A-SECRET-AGENT GOT *AWAY* WITH IT.!

BUT JEST LET 'IM GET WITHIN *RANGE* 'A ME, AN' I'LL...

CALM DOWN, BEN--WHAT'S DONE IS *DONE!* FURY THOUGHT HE HAD GOOD *REASON* FOR WHAT HE DID!

PERHAPS, IN A FEW DAYS, WHEN WE LOOK *BACK* ON THIS, WE'LL *AGREE* WITH HIM--

--BUT I *DOUBT* IT.

NEXT ISSUE: The SILVER SURFER SOARS AGAIN!

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ALL-NEW! MADROX.. THE MULTIPLE MENACE!

ACTION IN THE MIGHTY MARVEL MANNER!

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WRITER/EDITOR CO-WRITER ILLUSTRATORS GLYNIS WEIN, COLORIST

MADROX THE MULTIPLE MAN!

IN CENTURIES AGONE, PEOPLE FILLED THE COLISEUMS TO WATCH **MAN** PIT SKILL AND SINEW AGAINST **MAN** IN A BATTLE TO THE **DEATH**. THEY CALLED THOSE EVENTS **GLADITORIAL GAMES**.

TODAY, PEOPLE **STILL** FILL THE COLISEUMS ONCE A WEEK TO WATCH **MAN** BATTLE **MAN**-- THOUGH THE STAKES ARE NO LONGER LIFE AND DEATH (OR SO THEY **SAY**). THE **GAME** IN TRUTH, IS ALMOST THE SAME; ONLY THE **NAME** HAS CHANGED.

FOOTBALL--YEAH!

TRAINS

I'LL **TELL** YA, ALICIA HONEY-- JEST ***WATCHIN'*** THAT JOE NAMATH GOIN' OUT FER A LONG ONE GIVES ME GALLOPIN' ***GOOSEBUMPS!***

BENJAMIN J. GRIMM-- WHAT AM I GOING TO ***DO*** WITH YOU?

WELL, *FIRST* YA CAN... *HEY!* THERE'S OUR *TRAIN!*

C'MON, BABY--WE CAN STILL *MAKE* IT IF THEY...

HOLD IT! FER PETE'S SAKE, WILL YA *HOLD IT* AL'READY?

BEN? BEN, WHAT'S *HAPPENING?*

NOTHIN' YER BLUE-EYED *LOVER-BOY* CAN'T HANDLE WITH...

SKRUMP!

OOPS.

"*SHEESH!* GOT ME THE FEELIN' I'M IN *HOT WATER* AGAIN."

SKREEECH

BENJAMIN GRIMM! I'VE TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES--YOU MUST LEARN TO *CONTROL* YOURSELF!

WOULD IT HELP IF I TOLD YA I WUZ *SORRY?*

BENJAMIN!

I DIDN'T *THINK SO.*

SHORTLY, AFTER THE APPROPRIATE SUMMONSES HAVE BEEN ISSUED...

BEN, IT WAS VERY *THOUGHTLESS* OF YOU--*UPSETTING* ALL THOSE NICE PEOPLE THAT WAY.

HONEY, IF YOU THINK *THEY* WUZ UPSET-- JEST WAIT'LL OL' *REED* GETS THE *REPAIR BILL* FER THAT...

LLUURCH!

WHAT IN--? SOMEBODY *STOPPED* THE FREAKIN' *TRAIN!*

ALICIA, YOU OKAY, BABY? IF THEY *HURT* YA, I'LL...

HEY-- *CONDUCTOR!* WHAT KIND 'A *KAMIKAZI ENGINEERS* YOU GOT ON THIS LINE?

SORRY, MISTER--

--BUT THERE'S SOMEBODY ON THE *TRACKS* UP AHEAD, *BLOCKING* OUR WAY! WE CAN'T...

HUH?

MEBBE *YOU* CAN'T, CHUMMO-- BUT *I* SURE CAN! JEST STEP ASIDE AN' LET A *PRO* HANDLE THIS!

BOY, JEST WHAT I *NEEDED*-- SOME BLAMED *SCREWBALL* PLAYIN' "*KING 'A THE MOUNTAIN*" WITH A TRAIN--

--WHILE I'M HOLDIN' TWO TICKETS ON THE *50-YARD LINE!*

SOUNDS LIKE THE KINDA JERKY STUNT YA'D EXPECT OUTTA SOME CRUMMY *YANCY STREETER*--

--'CEPT THAT *NO* YANCY STREETER'S GOT *BRAINS* ENUFF TA FIGGER WHICH END 'A THE TRAIN IS THE *FRONT!*

WELL, WHOEVER IT IS, I'M GONNA FOLD, SPINDLE, AN' *MUTILATE* THE BUM IF HE DON'T...

HUH?

HE'D EXPECTED A TEEN-AGED TOUGH PERHAPS, SOMEBODY HIGH ON VAPORS, PILLS--OR JUST THE THRILL OF FLAUNTING WITH DANGER.

HE'D EXPECTED A JUVENILE DELINQUINT, A DRUNK WHO'D LOST HIS WAY, A PRANKSTER, A MADMAN--

--BUT HE'D NEVER EXPECTED--THIS!

YOU--YOU ARE DIFFERENT--LIKE ME!

I AM--MADROX!

I DON'T CARE IF YER THE TOOTH FAIRY, MEATBALL! JEST GET OFF THE BLASTED TRACKS!

YOU--REJECT ME? WHY?

WE ARE DIFFERENT--YOU AND I! WE ARE--THE SAME! WHY DO YOU--REJECT ME?

I WILL STAY HERE--UNTIL I KNOW!

OKAY, GLOWWORM, I GAVE YA A CHANCE TO WALK AWAY FROM THIS--

--BUT NOW THEY'RE JEST GONNA HAFTA CARRY YA AWAY!

IN OTHER WORDS, BRIGHT-EYES--

--IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

I BEEN LOOKIN' FOWARD TA TODAY'S GAME FER **WEEKS**, BOZO--AN' IF YOU MAKE ME **MISS** IT, I'LL...

CRIPES! LOOKS LIKE GLOW-WORM HARDLY EVEN **FELT** THAT!

SPAK!

WHY DO YOU **ATTACK** ME? I DO NOT--**UNDER-STAND.**

YERS AIN'T EXACTLY TA REASON **WHY**, CHUM! YERS IS JEST TA STAND **STILL** FER A SECOND--

--'CAUSE **THIS** TIME I AIN'T PULLIN' MY PUNCH!

*A ROCKY ORANGE **FIST** STRIKES WITH THE FORCE OF A RAM-PANT **JACKHAMMER**--*

THWAMMM

*--AND THE MAN CALLED **MADROX** SEEMS TO **SHIMMER** BENEATH THE IMPACT--*

*--HIS POWERFUL FIGURE BLURRING, TWISTING, **CHANGING**--*

*--UNTIL A STARTLED BENJAMIN J. GRIMM **BEHOLDS**--*

I DON'T **BELIEVE** IT--!

*--FOR, WHERE ONCE THERE STOOD **ONE** MADROX, THERE NOW STANDS **TWO**--*

*--AND **BOTH** OF THEM ARE VERY, VERY **ANGRY!***

I **STILL** DON'T BELIEVE IT--!

PLAMM!

THROOM!

OKAY... OKAY AL'READY ...I BELIEVE IT!

BUT THAT DON'T MEAN I GOTTA LIKE IT!

YA KIN COME AT ME ONE AT A TIME OR ALL IN A GROUP, BUTTON-BOD--

--BUT EITHER WAY, BUNKIE--

"--THE EVER-LOVIN', BLUE-EYED THING KIN HANDLE ALL 'A YA!"

SPLANG!

VIOLENTLY, THE TWIN BEINGS CALLED MADROX PLUNGE FROM THE ELEVATED TRACKS--

--THE SHEER FORCE OF THEIR FALL EASILY POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DEVASTATE AN ORDINARY MAN--

WHRAKK!

--BUT MADROX, IT QUICKLY BECOMES APPARENT, IS BY FAR NO ORDINARY MAN!

SHEESH! FIRST THERE'S ONE... THEN TWO... NOW THERE'S FOUR 'A THIS BOZO!

WHAT AM I TANGLIN' WITH--A MAN OR THE WHOLE BLAMED KING FAMILY?

PWOK

NO... DON'T *TELL* ME...

...'CUZ I *DON'T* THINK I WANNA *KNOW!*

I AIN'T SURE JEST *WHAT* KIND 'A COCKAMAMIE *DITTO MACHINE* YA ESCAPED FROM, BUSTER--

--BUT IF YA THINK YA GOT ME *OUT-NUMBERED*--

--YER *OUTTA* YER EVER-LOVIN'--

--MUUUMMPHH!

KWOOM!

IN THE INTERESTS OF DELICACY, WE WILL REFRAIN FROM DESCRIBING THE CARNAGE THAT ENSUES FOR THE NEXT TEN MINUTES.

SPLANG

TYSILHIST

SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT BASHFUL BENJY WILL REMEMBER THOSE MOMENTS IN GREAT DETAIL--

--AT LEAST UNTIL THE BRUISES HEAL!

LOOK AT 'EM... *STARIN'* AT ME LIKE I WUZ SOME KIND'A *FREAK*...

I GOTTA GET *UP*... I JEST *GOTTA*...

AT WHICH POINT, OF COURSE--EVERYTHING MERCIFULLY FADES TO BLACK!

COMBAT-BOOTED ELE-PHANTS ARE MARCHING IN CADENCE ACROSS HIS FOREHEAD WHEN, AT LAST, BEN PRIES OPEN HIS HEAVY-LIDDED EYES--

WH-WHA' HAPPENED?

--TO FIND HIS NIGHTMARES ARE STILL VERY MUCH WITH HIM!

HUH? THEY'RE STILL THERE... STILL STARIN'...

WELL, I'LL MAKE 'EM STOP STARIN' IF I HAFTA... HEY!?!

TAKE IT EASY, OLD FRIEND.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.

OH--IT'S YOU, STRETCH. FER A SECOND, I THOUGHT...

I KNOW WHAT YOU THOUGHT, BEN-- YOU'VE BEEN TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP.

FERGET IT, CHUM. IF I TOLD YA, YA'D PROB'LY THINK I WUZ STILL DREAMIN'--

JUST WHO--OR WHAT--IS MADROX?

--OR CRAZY.

HOW LONG WUZ I OUT?

ABOUT SIX-AND-A-HALF HOURS, BEN. WHY?

SIX-AN'-A-HALF WHOLE HOURS? CRIPES!

HEY, HOT-SHOT-- HOW'D THE BLASTED JETS GAME TURN OUT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK, OL' BUDDY? NAMATH'S BOYS BLEW IT-- 49 TO 27!

IT FIGGERS.

SOME DAYS THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' THAT GOES RIGHT.

OFFHAND, STRETCH--

--YA GOT ANY IDEAS WHA' *HAPPENED* TA ME BACK THERE?

NOT *EXACTLY*, BEN.

UNFORTUNATELY, THIS *MADROX* WAS ALREADY *GONE* BY THE TIME THE POLICE ARRIVED AND *FOUND* YOU.

I'D LIKE TA DO SOME *FINDIN'* 'A MY OWN, STRETCHO-- IF YA KNOW WHAT I *MEAN!*

BEN, WE MUST KNOW *MORE* ABOUT MADROX BEFORE WE...

VWOOP VWOOP

WHAT--?

SOMETHING'S ACTIVATED THE *METROPOLITAN POWER ALARM*, REED!

CRIPES! WE AIN'T HADDA USE *THAT* GIZMO SINCE THE *BIG BLACKOUT* OF '65!

WHAT'S MAKIN' IT GO *HAYWIRE* LIKE THAT?

THAT'S JUST WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO *DISCUSS* WITH YOU, BEN.

CON EDISON HAS BEEN REPORTING SELECTIVE *POWER FAILURES* THRU-OUT THE CITY FOR THE PAST SEVERAL *HOURS*.

THE SITUATION IS GROWING *CRITICAL*-- AND THEY STILL HAVE *NO* IDEA OF THE *CAUSE!*

BUT YOU *DO*-- HUH, STRETCH?

I *THINK* SO, BEN, TAKE A LOOK AT THE *SCREEN*.

THOSE *PULSES* FIRST APPEARED AT ABOUT THE TIME YOU FIRST BATTLED *MADROX*. THEY'VE BEEN GROWING *STRONGER* EVER SINCE.

FRANKLY, BEN--I DON'T THINK YOU'LL HAVE TO GO *LOOKING* FOR MADROX--

--BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE *HE'S* COMING TO *US!*

REED RICHARDS MAY WELL BE RIGHT--FOR AT THIS VERY MOMENT, THE BEING CALLED MADROX WALKS THE STREETS OF MID-TOWN MANHATTAN, ALONE...AND MOST CONFUSED.

HE WOULD HAVE BEEN HERE SOONER --BUT HE GOT LOST IN QUEENS.

MADROX WALKS, EYES WIDE WITH WONDER, NEVER LOOKING BACK, NEVER SEEING THE BRIGHT LIGHTS THAT SPUTTER INTO DARKNESS AS HE PASSES.

HE WALKS, NEVER LOOKING BACK--AND BEHIND HIM, MANHATTAN DIES!

HE WAS CHRISTENED JAMES ARTHUR MADROX, SON OF DANIEL AND JOAN. BORN, SEPTEMBER 7, 1953. HE WAS A HANDSOME BABY.

SLAP!

BUT FROM THE FIRST, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS ALSO RATHER... DIFFERENT.

TWO WEEKS LATER, DR. DANIEL MADROX RESIGNED FROM THE LOS ALAMOS NUCLEAR RESEARCH CENTER, AND MOVED TO KANSAS.

THE ACADEMIC WORLD NEVER HEARD FROM HIM AGAIN. IT HARDLY NOTICED.

THE MADROX FARM WAS ISOLATED (INTENTIONALLY)--AND JAMIE GREW UP WITHOUT ANY FRIENDS--SAVE HIS PARENTS.

MOM, WHY DO I HAVE TO WEAR THIS FUNNY SUIT?

IT'S NOT FUNNY, JAMIE--IT'S SPECIAL.

A SPECIAL SUIT FOR MY SPECIAL SON.

JAMIE WONDERED ABOUT HIS STRANGE SUIT, ASKED ABOUT IT, "WHEN YOU'RE OLDER", HIS FATHER WOULD TELL HIM, "WHEN YOU'RE OLDER, I'LL TELL YOU... AND PERHAPS YOU'LL UNDERSTAND."

BUT DANIEL MADROX NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO OFFER EXPLANATIONS. A FREAK TORNADO SWEPT ACROSS THE FARM ONE HUMID JULY AFTERNOON.

WHEN THE STORM HAD PASSED, JAMIE MADROX WAS AN ORPHAN.

JAMIE WAS **FIFTEEN** WHEN HIS PARENTS DIED. THE NEXT SIX YEARS PASSED **QUICKLY.**

JAMIE DIDN'T REALLY **LIKE** LIVING ALONE... BUT HE GOT **USED** TO IT.

UNTIL, ONE EVENING TWO MONTHS AGO, JAMIE TURNED ON THE **TV**--AND ALL **HELL** BROKE LOOSE!

RAW **POWER** CORRUSCATED UPON HIS BODY: **PAIN** FLAYED HIM ALIVE--

--AND THE RE-SULTING SPASMS **DESTROYED** EVERY ELECTRIC-AL APPLIANCE IN THE HOUSE.

JAMIE MADROX BEGAN TO FEEL **ALONE** AFTER THAT... ALONE AND **SCARED**...

...HIS **FEAR** DRIVING HIM OUT FROM HIS FARM, DRIVING HIM **ACROSS** THE SPRAWL-ING **HEART-LAND** OF AMERICA...

...DRIVING HIM, AT LAST, TO **NEW YORK!**

TIRED--FEEL SO **TIRED**-- SO **HUNGRY**--

--YET THAT **BUILDING** AHEAD SEEMS TO **DRAW** ME TO IT--AS A **MOTH** IS DRAWN TO A **FLAME.**

DON'T KNOW **WHY** IT CALLS ME--ONLY KNOW I MUST **GO** TO IT.

MAYBE THERE'S **SOMEONE** THERE WHO CAN **HELP** ME.

MAYBE.

AND THEN AGAIN... MAYBE NOT.

THERE'S A DANGEROUS **PROGRESSION** AT WORK HERE.

EACH TIME WE PICK UP AN **ENERGY PULSE,** IT'S GROWN GEOMETRICALLY **STRONGER** THAN THE PULSE BEFORE.

IF IT *IS* MADROX, HE'S ABSORBING THE CITY'S *ENERGY* AT AN *INCREDIBLE* RATE!

IF WE CAN'T FIND A WAY TO *STOP* HIM--AND STOP HIM *SOON*--

YEAH, I KNOW, STRETCHO... I *KNOW*!

REED--THE LIGHTS--!

THE *GENERATORS--!* SOMETHING'S CUT THE *POWER*!

BLAST! THE *EMERGENCY GENERATOR* IS DEAD AS WELL!

THIS IS ALMOST BEYOND *BELIEF*!

MADROX MUST BE SIPHONING OFF THE ENTIRE *MID-MANHATTAN POWER GRID*-- ABSORBING *BILLIONS* OF *ERGS* OF ENERGY AS IF...

HUSH, --AND *LISTEN*!

I *HEAR* IT, MEDUSA--THE SOUNDS OF HEAVY *FOOTSTEPS* ON THE *ROOF*!

WELL, IF IT'S BEN'S FORMER *PLAYMATE*, HE'S GONNA GET A *HOTTER* RECEPTION THAN HE *BARGAINED* FOR.

FLAME ON!

JOHNNY-- *WAIT*!

THIS GUY *TOTALS* EVERY FREAKIN' SYSTEM IN THE BUILDING--AND YOU WANT US TO JUST SIT STILL AND *TAKE* IT--?!

NO WAY, BROTHER-IN-LAW!

WHAT--? ANOTHER ONE WHO IS *DIFFERENT*-- DIFFERENT LIKE *ME*.

MAYBE ONE WHO CAN-- *HELP* ME.

I AM-- *MADROX*.

YEAH? WELL, I'M THE *HUMAN TORCH*, FELLA--AND *NOBODY* STOMPS ON MY BASHFUL, BLUE-EYED *BUDDY* WITHOUT ANSWERING TO *ME!*

PLEASE-- *NO!* YOUR FLAMES *HURT* ME-- TEAR ME *APART--!*

I DON'T *GET* IT!?! I JUST FIRED A *WARNING FLARE* AT HIM--

--BUT HE'S SCREAMING LIKE I HIT HIM WITH MY *NOVA BLAST!*

LOOK, BUDDY--I DON'T WANT TO *HURT* YOU BUT...

UUNNHH!

HURT ME? YOU CANNOT HURT ME!

SKROOM!

YOU CAN ONLY DIE!!

THAT *PUNCH*... FLEW RIGHT *INTO* IT... HEAD'S *SPINNING*... CAN'T *CONCENTRATE*...

FLAME GOING OUT... FALLING... FALLING...

BUT EVEN AS THE SEMI-CONSCIOUS YOUTH PLUMMETS TOWARDS THE STREET LOOMING 36 STORIES BELOW, THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE SUDDENLY STREAKS OUT OF THE DARKNESS AS...

NO-- SCRATCH THAT-- EVEN REED RICHARDS COULDN'T BE THAT PRESUMTUOUS.

HANG ON, JOHNNY--I'VE *GOT* YOU!

AND IF THIS ISN'T AN APPROPRIATE MOMENT FOR THE CAVALRY TO ARRIVE, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT IS.

BEN, IS THAT...?

YEAH, RED-- THAT'S MADROX AL'RIGHT!

GLOWWORM, IT'S BAD ENUFF YA COST ME AN AFTERNOON'S FOOTBALL--

--BUT WHEN YA START BEATIN' UP ON MY HOT-HEADED LITTLE PAL--

MISTER, THAT'S WHEN YA GET PULVERIZED!

THOOM!

OH, NO...NOT AGAIN!?!

THE FRENCH CALL IT DÉJA VU, THE INESCAPABLE FEELING OF HAVING EXPERIENCED SOMETHING IN SOME PREVIOUS TIME.

BEN GRIMM KNOWS ALL ABOUT DÉJA VU...MUCH TO HIS REGRET.

BEN IS TOO STUNNED TO DEFEND HIMSELF--

--WHICH MEANS I'VE GOT TO BUY HIM TIME TO GAIN HIS SECOND WIND--

--BUT BUYING TIME IS SOMETHING THAT MEDUSA DOES QUITE--

SPRAK!

--WELL.

HMMM... IT'S OBVIOUS WE CAN'T USE *FORCE* AGAINST MADROX--

--OR WE'LL BE UP TO OUR EARS IN *DUPLICATES!*

NO... OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO *RESTRAIN* THEM SOMEHOW...

BUT THAT IS FAR EASIER *SAID* THAN *DONE*--

--FOR THESE DUPLICATES ARE *FED* BY MADROX'S ANGER-- AND HIS *ANGER* IS FLED BY NEW YORK'S *POWER*--

--WHICH FORMS A VICIOUS CIRCLE THAT *BUILDS* IN INTENSITY--

--UNTIL--

--THE MULTIPLE MADROX BREAKS *FREE!*

--AN ACTION THAT SENDS A DAZED REED RICHARDS HURTLING WILDLY *OVER* THE ROOF-EDGE--

--TO BEHOLD A SIGHT THAT *FREEZES* THE MARROW IN HIS BONES--

THE CITY OF NEW YORK, FOR AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE-- COLD-- DARK-- DYING!

MADROX HAS DONE THIS!

OKAY, JOY-BOY-- I'M *THRU* PLAYIN' AROUND WITH YA!

"YA KNOW-- THIS IS GETTIN' KIND'A *MONOTONOUS!*"

AND ALMOST AS IF IT WERE LAUGHING AT BEN'S WEAK JEST--THE BAXTER BUILDING TREMBLES!

BEN--NO! WE HAVE TO STOP MADROX ANOTHER WAY--!

GOT A FAST SUGGESTION HOW, STRETCH?

RESTRAIN HIM, HOWEVER YOU CAN--

"--BUT WHATEVER YOU DO--DON'T HIT HIM!"

KNOW SUMTHIN', STRETCH? YA CAN TAKE THE FUN OUTTA ANYTHIN'!

PWA-DOOM!

BUT THE STAG-GERED THING'S MOST-ELIQUENT EPITHET GOES UNHEARD--

--AGAINST THE WHUPPING ROAR OF A SWIFT-DESCENDING--

--HELICOPTER-- LOWERING A VORTEX BEAM TO THIS ROOF--!

IT'S UNLOAD-ING A PASSENGER --BUT WHO--?

HIS NAME IS CHARLES XAVIER, DEAN OF A MOST-EXCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN WEST-CHESTER AND RENOWNED EXPERT ON THE SUBJECT OF MUTANTS--

--BUT IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN CALL HIM-- PROFESSOR X!

GENTLY, THE VORTEX BEAM LOWERS HIM TOWARDS THE BAXTER BUILDING--

--UNTIL, ABRUPTLY, 100 FEET ABOVE THE ROOF--

NO--THE VORTEX BEAM'S BEEN CANCELLED--

--AND IT'S DROPPING ITS PASSENGER --HARD!

EYES ABLAZE WITH MADNESS, MADROX WATCHES THE FRAIL FIGURE PLUMMET SAVAGELY TOWARDS DESTRUCTION--

--AND A LOOK OF ALMOST-RECOGNITION WASHES ACROSS HIS TAUT FACE FOR AN INSTANT--

--THEN IS GONE!

EASY, FELLA-- YER IN *SAFE*-- *HEY!?!*

PERFESSER X! I *THOUGHT* I RECOGNIZED YA--!

I *APPRECIATE* THE THOUGHT, BEN GRIMM-- *AND* THE HELPING HAND!

DON'T *MENTION* IT, PROF--ALL JEST PART'A THE *JOB!*

SPEAKING OF *JOBS*, PROFESSOR --WHAT BRINGS *YOU* HERE?

MADROX BRINGS ME HERE, REED RICHARDS.

YEARS AGO, I KNEW HIS *FATHER*. IT WAS *MY* SUGGESTION THAT HIS FAMILY MOVE TO *KANSAS*.

WHEN MY SPECIAL MUTANT DETECTOR *CEREBRO* REVEALED JAMIE MADROX TO BE IN *NEW YORK*, I KNEW SOMETHING WAS TERRIBLY *WRONG!*

THAT IS WHY I'M HERE, MY FRIENDS--

--FOR JAMIE MADROX IS *MY* RESPONSIBILITY!

BUT AS THE SOMBER-FACED PROFESSOR APPROACHES THE GLOWERING MADROX...

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU *WANT* WITH ME?

I AM A *FRIEND* OF YOUR PARENTS, JAMIE, I WANT TO...

MY PARENTS ARE... *DEAD!*

PROFESSOR-- *BEHIND* YOU! ONE OF THE *DUPLICATES*--!

EH?

DON'T *WORRY*, PROFESSOR-- I CAN HANDLE THIS!

THE BUILDING TREMBLES ONCE MORE AS THE DUPLICATE MADROX IS SAVAGELY SLAMMED AGAINST THE ROOF--

--AND THIS TIME, THE SURROUNDING BUILDINGS TREMBLE AS WELL!

ODD. THAT IS *NOT* SUPPOSED TO *HAPPEN*.

JAMIE'S SUIT IS DESIGNED TO *NEUTRALIZE* THE DUPLICATION PROCESS. IT SHOULD...

OF COURSE! THE *SUIT* IS THE CORE OF OUR PROBLEM. IT'S BEEN *SIX* YEARS SINCE JAMIE'S PARENTS DIED--SIX *YEARS* SINCE THE SUIT WAS LAST *OVERHAULED!*

SOME OF THE *CONTROL ELEMENTS* MUST HAVE *BURNED OUT* BY NOW!

WHICH MEANS THAT ALL *WE* HAVE TO DO IS *DISCONNECT* THOSE CONTROL ELEMENTS--AND THE *CRISIS* IS *OVER!*

SO LET'S *DO IT,* TEAM!

*BUT EVEN AS THE FANTASTIC FOUR SURGE **FORWARD**, THE MINIONS OF MADROX MOVE TO **PROTECT** THEIR MASTER...*

REED--*LOOK!*

I *SEE,* JOHNNY--BUT STILL WE HAVE TO *GET* TO MADROX WITHOUT CREATING ANY MORE *DUPLICATES!*

FRANKLY, I'M NOT SURE *HOW*--

--BUT I *DO* KNOW WE HAVE TO *TRY!*

NO! THEY WERE *READY* FOR ME--CAN'T WRIGGLE *FREE* OF THEIR *GRASP!*

SHEESH--HOW *HUMILIATIN'!* STOPPED COLD BY THREE BLAMED *PANTY-WAISTS* I COULD DECK WITH *ONE* PUNCH--

--IF REED'D ONLY LET ME LAY A *GLOVE* ON 'EM!

I'M BLAZING *WHITE-HOT* BUT THESE CREEPS DON'T SEEM TO *FEEL* IT--

--AS IF THEIR OUTFITS WERE SIMPLY *ABSORBING* THE HEAT--!

AND **MEDUSA** *TOO IS QUICKLY RENDERED* **HELPLESS**, *HER INHUMAN LIVING HAIR* **NO MATCH** *FOR THE MADDENED DUPLICATES.*

WITHIN SECONDS, ONLY **CHARLES XAVIER** *IS LEFT FREE TO* **ACT**!

INSTANTLY, INSTINCTIVELY, HIS **MIND** *REACHES OUT--THE MOST* **POWERFUL** *MIND ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH!*

DELICATELY, HE **"FEELS"** *FOR THE MINDS OF MADROX'S DUPLICATES--* **SENSES** *THEM--* **ENTERS** *THEM--*

--HIS PSYCHIC ENERGY SIFTING THE **PRIMAL ESSENCE** *OF THEIR IDENTICAL PERSONALITIES --***PENETRATING** *TO THE VERY* **CORE** *OF THEIR BEINGS--*

--AND, ONE BY ONE, HE **SNUFFS** *THOSE DUPLICATE MINDS...* **OUT**!

HEY? WHA' THE HECK IS *GOIN' ON?*

THE DUPES *KEELED OVER--* JUST LIKE *THAT!* I DON'T *GET* IT!?!

MEDUSA?

I AM *WELL*, JOHNNY. MY CAPTOR WAS STRUCK DOWN BY THE *SAME* FORCE THAT FREED *YOU.*

WHICH BRINGS IT DOWN TO MADROX AND *US* AGAIN-- JUST AS IT WAS IN THE *BEGINNING.*

NO! STAY *AWAY* FROM ME--OR I WILL *HURT* YOU!

SORRY, SON--

--BUT WITH-OUT YOUR *DUPLICATES,* YOU'RE PRETTY *EASY* TO DEAL WITH!

PERHAPS THAT STATE-MENT WAS A BIT--AH-- *PREMATURE!*

MADROX HAS GOT THE MAIN NEW YORK *POWER GRID* BACKING UP THOSE PUNCHES--!

IT'S LIKE BEING WORKED OVER BY A *BULLDOZER!*

CAN'T TAKE MUCH *MORE* OF THIS--BUT I HAVE TO *HOLD ON*--HAVE TO *DIS-CONNECT* THE *CONTROL ELEMENTS* ON HIS SUIT BEFORE...

STOP! *STOP!* YOU'RE-- TEARING ME *APART!* *STOP*-- OR I'LL-- *HURT* YOU!

YOU'RE DOING A PRETTY *FAIR* JOB *NOW,* SON--BUT IF I CAN JUST *REWIRE* THESE LAST FEW *CIRCUITS...*

DONE IT!

THE SUIT IS *POWERLESS!*

YOU OKAY, STRETCH? YOU LOOK KIND'A...

I'LL LIVE, OLD FRIEND--

--AND SO WILL JAMIE MADROX!

THANK YOU, PROFESSOR, THE COLLAPSE OF THE BOY'S DUPLICATES WAS YOUR DOING, WAS IT NOT?

IT WAS.

I HAVE CERTAIN... SPECIAL ABILITIES, RICHARDS. I MERELY PUT THEM TO PROPER USE.

WHAT I DID TO JAMIE'S DUPLICATES WAS NOT A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE, I ASSURE YOU--

--BUT IT WAS NECESSARY.

YEAH, PROF--BUT SINCE THEM DUPES ALL VANISHED WHEN REED DECKED MADROX--

--WHADDAYA GONNA DO ABOUT THE KID?

I WILL TAKE HIM WITH ME, MR. GRIMM.

GIVEN TIME-- AND LUCK--I BELIEVE I CAN HELP HIM CURE HIS MADNESS AND TEACH HIM TO COPE WITH HIS POWER.

YES... GIVEN TIME...

LATER, AFTER ALL THE GOOD-BYES HAVE BEEN SAID...

LOOK AT THAT, REED. ISN'T THAT A SIGHT WORTH FIGHTING FOR?

I SUPPOSE SO, JOHNNY--

--BUT I'D LIKE TO THINK THERE'LL COME A TIME WHEN THERE'LL BE NO NEED FOR FIGHTING--NO NEED FOR SENSELESS VIOLENCE.

I SAID IT BEFORE, STRETCH--I'LL SAY IT AGAIN--

YA KNOW HOW TA TAKE THE FUN OUTTA ANYTHIN'!

NEXT: ENTER... THE INHUMANS!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

BECAUSE YOU *DEMANDED* IT--
THE
SILVER SURFER
IS BACK!

AND *THIS* TIME HE'S COME TO
DESTROY
THE *FANTASTIC FOUR!*

ALL-OUT ACTION--
AS ONLY MIGHTY *MARVEL* CAN PRESENT IT!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

LEN WEIN WRITER / RICH BUCKLER & JOE SINNOTT ARTISTS / GLYNIS OLIVER WEIN: colorist JOHN COSTANZA: letterer / ROY THOMAS, EDITOR

BATTLE ROYAL!

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE JUNGLES OF SOUTH AMERICA AND EQUATORIAL AFRICA AND THE JUNGLE THAT IS NEW YORK?

ANSWER: IN NEW YORK, IT IS SLIGHTLY HARDER TO TELL WHICH ONES ARE THE ANIMALS.

SLIGHTLY-- BUT NOT MUCH.

HEY, ANGIE-- SCAN THE TOURIST TYPES!

TSK, TSK-- HAVEN'T THEY HEARD IT AIN'T SAFE TO WANDER THRU CENTRAL PARK ALONE?

MEBBE WE SHOULD GO OVER AND INFORM THEM OF THAT FACT-- AND CUT OURSELVES A LITTLE PIECE OF THE ACTION WHILE WE'RE AT IT!

MISTER? HEY, MISTER--YOU GOT A MATCH?

HEY--YOU--DON'T YOU HEAR SO GOOD?

I ASKED YOU IF YOU HAD A MATCH!

BUZZ OFF, CREEP.

LOOK--DON'T MAKE ME GET TOUGH WITH YOU, FATSO!

HAND OVER YOUR WALLET OR I'LL CUT YOU INTO...

OH.

PLEASE, MISTER--! I DIDN'T MEAN TO..

SURE YA DIDN'T, PUNK--

--JEST LIKE I DON'T MEAN TA REARRANGE YER UGLY PUSS RIGHT NOW!

SURE!

WRUNCH!!

BEN, CONTROL YOURSELF! IF YOU USE YOUR POWER ON THAT BOY, YOU'LL KILL HIM!

AWWW... NUTS!

BUT BOZO STILL NEEDS A LITTLE LESSON--!

SO YA THINK YER TOUGH, HUH?

SKRANK!

MEATBALL, YA DON'T KNOW THE MEANIN' OF THE WORD!

NOW THE DAY YA CAN *UNTIE* THIS, BUSTER--

--IS THE DAY YA CAN CALL YERSELF *TOUGH!*

IT NEVER CEASES TO *AMAZE* ME THAT, WITH ALL THE *BEAUTY* THAT SURROUNDS HIM, MAN CAN STILL BE SO *SAVAGE* AS TO...

HEY--! WHAT THE HECK IS-- *THAT?*

KWOOM!

AYE, JOHNNY STORM--BUT *THIS* TIME I DO *NOT* COME AS A *FRIEND!*

*HE HURTLES THRU THE AFTERNOON SKY LIKE A **STAR** FALLEN FROM THE HEAVENS--**SUNLIGHT** DANCING WILDLY ACROSS HIS GLISTENING SKIN, **SORROW** MIRRORED IN HIS MOLTEN EYES--*

*--FOR, IN ALL THE WORLD, THERE IS PERHAPS **NO** BEING MORE **NOBLE** THAN HE... NOR MORE TERRIBLY **ALONE!***

AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS-- *THE SILVER SURFER HAS RETURNED!*

WH-WHAT DOES HE *MEAN* BY THAT?

I AIN'T *SURE*, RED--BUT IF HE MEANS WHAT I *THINK* HE DOES--

--IT'S *CLOBBERIN'* TIME!

IT IS *INDEED*, BENJAMIN GRIMM!

THE ONLY POINT OF *CONTENTION* IS--

--*WHO* SHALL "CLOBBER" *WHOM*?

OKAY, CHUM--THAT *DOES* IT!

FLAME ON!

WHOMP!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TURNED YOU *AGAINST* US, SPACE-MAN--BUT WHEN YOU ATTACK *ONE* OF THE FAN-TASTIC FOUR--

--YOU ATTACK US ALL!

JOHNNY--*WAIT!* THE SURFER IS TOO *POWER-FUL* FOR YOU TO HANDLE WITHOUT...

IT'S *TOO LATE*, REED! THE SILVER ONE HAS *EVADED* JOHNNY'S *FIRST* ASSAULT, AND NOW--

--HE'S HEADING STRAIGHT FOR US!

FORGIVE WHAT I MUST DO THIS DAY, MY ONE-TIME FRIENDS-- FOR I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE!

YOUR STRUGGLES SERVE ONLY TO MAKE A PAINFUL TASK MORE DIF-FICULT!

IN THE END, I SHALL CERTAINLY TRIUMPH-- FOR I MUST TRIUMPH!

HE WHO ONCE WAS HERALD TO GALACTUS IS CAPABLE OF NOTHING LESS!

WELL, YOU'LL EXCUSE US IF WE DON'T LIE RIGHT DOWN AND FOLD LILIES ACROSS OUR CHESTS, SURFER--

--BUT WE WOULDN'T WANT TO MAKE THINGS TOO EASY FOR YOU!

ESPECIALLY SINCE THIS HAYMAKER BASHFUL BENJY TAUGHT ME IS GONNA KNOCK YOUR GLEAMING BLOCK CLEAN OFF YOUR...HUH? I MISSED!

YOU SEEM SURPRISED, JOHNNY STORM--YET AVOIDING YOUR PRIMITIVE ATTACK IS LITTLE CHALLENGE TO ONE WHO HAS SOARED THRU THE THICK OF RAGING METEOR STORMS!

C'MON, HOT-SHOT-- PULVERIZE THE BUM! LAY AN UPPERCUT ON 'IM! HIT 'IM INNA...

CRIPES! THE SURFER'S RUNNIN' RINGS AROUND THE KID! HE'S GONNA...

OH, NO... I DON'T WANNA LOOK!

SHOOM!

BLAST'S PUTTING OUT MY FLAMES-- CAN'T STAY ALOFT--!

SURFER, IF YOU'VE *HARMED* THIS BOY, I SWEAR *NOTHING* WILL STOP US FROM MAKING YOU *PAY!*

NOTHING, REED RICHARDS?

HAS YOUR FRAIL HUMAN *EGO* GROWN SO EXTRAVAGANTLY *LARGE--*

WHY DON'CHA COME A LITTLE *CLOSER,* CHROME-DOME-- AN' *FIND OUT!*

--THAT YOU ARE SO UNSWERVINGLY *CERTAIN?*

THEN SO I *SHALL,* BENJAMIN GRIMM--

--BUT I FEAR YOU'LL NOT HAVE *TIME* ENOUGH TO *REGRET* YOUR HASTY INVITATION!

FOR, IF THE *ONE* THING THAT MAKES THE LIFE OF THE STAR-CROSSED SILVER SURFER AT ALL *BEARABLE* IS TO *SURVIVE--*

--THE FANTASTIC FOUR MUST *DIE!*

F-FEEL SO *WEAK*--AS IF HE WERE D-DRAINING MY VERY *SOUL*--!

QUICKLY-- *BRACE* YOURSELVES--BEFORE THE SURFER CAN-- *ARRGH!*

NO, SCARLET-HAIR--EVEN *I* CANNOT DIM THAT SPARK OF *DIVINITY* WITHIN YOU--

--THOUGH I MAY *EXTINGUISH* THE SPARK OF *LIFE!*

AND, THOUGH IT *GRIEVES* ME, *EXTINGUISH* THAT VITAL SPARK I SHALL--

--FOR MY BODY *SEETHES* WITH THE POWER COSMIC--

--AND WHEN THAT POWER IS FULLY *UNLEASHED*, IT WILL...

IT WILL...

NO!

THOUGH MY *SPIRIT* MAY WRITHE FOREVER IN IMMEASURABLE *TORMENT*--

--THE SILVER SURFER CANNOT KILL!

YEAH? WELL, I AIN'T *IMPRESSED*, BALDY!

I AIN'T IMPRESSED *NOHOW!*

CALM DOWN, BEN! VIOLENCE WILL GET US NOWHERE!

THERE'S OBVIOUSLY A REASON BEHIND THE SURFER'S ACTIONS --AND I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT IS!

THANK YOU, MY FRIEND.

MY "REASON" HAS ITS BEGINNINGS SHORTLY AFTER I PARTED COMPANY WITH THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES *--THE DEFENDERS!

ONCE MORE, MY HEART WAS HEAVY WITH THE THOUGHT OF MY FORCED EXILE UPON YOUR WORLD--

FOR MONTHS ON END, I REMAINED UPON THAT PEAK, ENTRANCED, UNMOVING-- UNTIL, AT LAST, MY MIND AND SPIRIT WERE WASHED CLEAN OF ALL SAVE THE GOAL I SO DESPERATELY SOUGHT--

--SO, TO THE CREST OF THIS PLANET'S HIGHEST PEAK I DID FLY-- TO PASS MY TIME IN SILENT MEDITATION-- AND PERHAPS FIND A WAY TO FREE MYSELF.

*WHOSE EXISTENCE, THOUGH UNKNOWN TO THE WORLD AT LARGE, WAS REVEALED TO THE THING IN MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #6 & 7. --ROY.

"--AND THE SILVER SURFER TOOK TO THE SKIES ONCE MORE!

"AROUND AND 'ROUND THIS ISLAND EARTH I HURTLED, MY VELOCITY INCREASING WITH EVERY PASS, MY CONCENTRATION GROWING STRONGER, MY RESOLVE MORE FIRM.

"THE WORLD NO LONGER EXISTED. THERE WAS NOTHING SAVE THE IMPRISONING BARRIER OF GALACTUS-- AND THAT TOO WAS NOTHING-- NOTHING THAT COULD NOT BE OVERCOME.

"THEN, FINALLY, THE COSMIC ENERGIES BEQUEATHED TO ME BY THAT SELF-SAME GALACTUS CORUSCATING UPON MY SILVERED FORM--

"I STRUCK THE ETERNALLY RESTRAINING BARRIER--

"--AND PASSED THRU IT!

AT LAST! THE SILVER SURFER IS FREE AGAIN--

--FREE TO SOAR AMIDST THE CURRENTS OF THE VOID!

"BUT MY TRIUMPH WAS TO BE TERRIBLY SHORT-LIVED--

"FOR THE POWER OF GALACTUS EXTENDED FAR BEYOND HIS NOW-VIOLATED BARRICADE!

NO! MY BODY SHRIVELS-- MY COSMIC ENERGIES DESERT ME--!

I HAVE SUNDERED THE BARRIER-- BUT I HAVE NOT ESCAPED!

"I FELL THEN--

"--MY PLUNGE BACK IN THRU THE BARRIER FAR EASIER THAN MY PASSAGE OUT THRU IT--

"--AND THE GALACTIAN BARRICADE SEALED ITSELF BEHIND ME!

"THOUGH MY POWERS DID SLOWLY RETURN TO ME, STILL I PLUMMETED HELPLESSLY TO EARTH--

"--TO STRIKE LIKE A RAMPANT METEOR IN THE CENTER OF WHAT, MERE INSTANTS BEFORE, HAD BEEN A SIMPLE VILLAGE SQUARE!

KWA BOOM!

"AND, THOUGH I DID NOT YET KNOW IT, MY SUDDEN ARRIVAL IN THAT QUAINT BALKAN TOWNSHIP HAD NOT GONE TOO TERRIBLY UNNOTICED!

"THE TOWNSPEOPLE RUSHED TOWARDS ME AS I AROSE FROM THE STILL-SMOKING CRATER.

"RATHER THAN DO UNNECESSARY BATTLE, I PREPARED TO TAKE FLIGHT--

"--AND THAT IS WHEN I NOTICED--THE POSTER!

OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN

LONG MAY SHE REIGN

BY THE SOUL OF MY HOMEWORLD ZENN-LA--!

IT IS THE IMAGE OF-- SHALLA BAL!

SHALLA BAL... MY BELOVED!

"--AND THE THOUGHT THAT, UNBEKNOWST TO **ME**, MY ADORED ONE HAD BEEN SO TANTALIZINGLY **NEAR** THESE MANY LONG MONTHS, SENT ME INTO A NEAR-HYSTERICAL **RAGE**!

MY SOUL FAIRLY **SHRIVELED** AT THE SIGHT-- FOR I'D BELIEVED SHALLA BAL FOREVER **BANISHED** TO ZENN-LA BY THE DIABOLICAL **MEPHISTO**--*

WHERE IS SHE, HUMAN? TELL ME WHERE TO **FIND** MY SHALLA BAL-- OR **PERISH**!

P-P-PLEASE-- OUR QUEEN LIVES AT YONDER **CASTLE**-- AT THE **CASTLE**!

THEN I WILL GO TO YOUR CASTLE, HUMAN-- BUT IF YOU HAVE **LIED** TO ME--

--THE SILVER SURFER WILL **RETURN**!

"I **REGRETTED** MY OUTBURST ALMOST IMMEDIATELY-- BUT THE **ANGUISH** IN MY HEART WAS ALMOST **TOO MUCH** FOR ME TO BEAR.

"SO CLOSE. ALL THESE MONTHS, SO CLOSE.

"I SWOOPED DOWN TOWARDS THE **CASTLE**, NOT KNOWING **WHAT** TO EXPECT--

"--BUT **NEVER** EXPECTING WHAT I **FOUND**!

* AS SEEMINGLY DEPICTED WAY BACK IN **SILVER SURFER** #17, O FAITHFUL ONE. --RASCALLY ROY.

"FOR I FOUND THE FANTASTIC FOUR, BATTLING WILDLY IN THE COURTYARD!

AW'RIGHT, YA BOZOS--YA WANTED A LITTLE CLOBBERIN' LESSON--

--YA GOT IT!

SPLOW!

THEY HAVE US BADLY OUTNUMBERED, REED! WHAT DO WE DO?

WE DO WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS DONE, JOHNNY--

--WE GO DOWN FIGHTING!

BROK!

"FOR A MOMENT, I HESITATED-- UNCERTAIN OF WHETHER TO OFFER YOU MY AID--

"--FOR YOU CERTAINLY DID NOT SEEM TO REQUIRE IT!

BUHDOW!

"BUT EVEN AS I REACHED THAT CONCLUSION, A SECOND SCORE OF COSTUMED ATTACKERS POURED FROM THE SHADOWS--

"--AND I WATCHED IN AMAZEMENT AS YOU FOUR CHARGED BOLDLY INTO THE GAPING JAWS OF DEATH!

OUTTA THE WAY, CREEP-CREW--WE'RE COMIN' THRU!

"THE ODDS AGAINST YOU WERE HOPELESS.

BOOM!

CHOOM!

THOOM!

WHOOM!

"THEN I WATCHED IN HORROR AS THE FOUR OF YOU--DIED!

YA DIRTY...

...LOUSY...

WHUMP!

ZZZKIK-IK-IK

EXCELLENT, MEN--YOU DISPATCHED THE ROBOTS MOST EFFECTIVELY!

I TRUST YOU WILL BE AS EFFICIENT WHEN YOU DO BATTLE WITH THE TRUE FANTASTIC FOUR!

"I WAS STUNNED.

"IT HAD ALL BEEN ONLY A TRAINING EXERCISE.

"BUT MY ASTONISHMENT PASSED QUICKLY-- AS I GLANCED THRU A CASTLE BALUSTRADE AND BEHELD...

MY BELOVED!

"MY SPIRIT SANG THEN--AS IT HAD NOT SUNG IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE CENTURIES. MY PRISON WORLD HAD ABRUPTLY BECOME A PARADISE.

SHALLA-BAL--MY DARLING! AT LAST WE ARE TOGETHER AGAIN!

WH-WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?

PLEASE--DON'T JEST WITH ME, BELOVED! AFTER SO LONG, I WANT ONLY TO HOLD YOU ONCE MORE AND...

I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT! NOW LEAVE QUICKLY--BEFORE I SUMMON THE GUARDS!

SHALLA-BAL--WHY DO YOU *LOOK* AT ME SO? DO YOU NOT *RECOGNIZE* ME?

NO, YOU COSMIC FOOL--SHE DOES *NOT*!

WHO--?

OF *COURSE*--I SHOULD HAVE *REALIZED*--! YOU ARE THE ONE *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THIS! ONLY *YOU* COULD BE SO *CRUEL*!

YOU *FLATTER* ME, SKY-RIDER--

--BUT IF SHALLA-BAL NO LONGER *KNOWS* YOU, IT IS BECAUSE SHE NO LONGER *DESIRES* TO KNOW YOU--

--AND THAT IS AS IT *SHOULD* BE!

SO LONG AS I SHALL LIVE, I WILL NEVER FORGET THE MOCKING LOOK OF *TRIUMPH* UPON HIS ARMORED FACE AT THAT MOMENT.

GO AHEAD, SILVER ONE--WREAK WHATEVER *HAVOC* YOU FEEL INCLINED TO--BUT *NOTHING* YOU MAY DO CAN ALTER THE *FACTS*!

YOUR ONCE-BELOVED BELONGS TO *ME* NOW, SKY-RIDER!

SHALLA-BAL IS NOW THE WIFE OF--

DOCTOR DOOM!

WHEN DOOM STOPPED *LAUGHING*, HE SWORE TO *RELEASE* SHALLA BAL FROM HER VOWS-- RETURN HER *MEMORY* --AND RETURN HER TO *ME*--

--IF I *WOULD* SLAY THE FAN-TASTIC FOUR!

AN'YA JEST *LEAPED* AT THE CHANCE-- HUH, YA BACK-STABBIN' SPACE-SKUNK!

WHAT OTHER *CHOICE* DID I HAVE? THERE IS *NOTHING* I WOULD NOT DO--NOTHING I WOULD NOT *SACRIFICE*-- TO REGAIN THE LOVE OF MY SHALLA BAL!

NOTHING... INCLUDING *YOU!*

SURFER, YOU *CAN'T*--!

ARRGH! REED, YA GOTTA *DO* SOMETHIN'! THE SURFER IS... *KILLIN'* US!

BUT I *MUST*! *FORGIVE* ME, MY FRIENDS-- I *BEG* OF YOU--

--*FORGIVE* ME!

NEXT ISSUE: WITNESS THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST VILLAIN --FOR TOMORROW IS... "*DOOM'S DAY!*"

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

INTO YOUR CAGES, YOU WITLESS FOOLS!

FROM THIS DAY ONWARD, YOU ARE SLAVES OF DOCTOR DOOM!

BUCKLER/SINNOTT

ALL THIS...AND THE SILVER SURFER TOO!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

LAST ISSUE, YOU WITNESSED THE GAME'S BEGINNING--A KING'S GAMBIT! NOW, BEHOLD THE--

MIDDLE GAME!

THE SILVER SURFER HAS RETURNED--

--BUT THIS TIME, I DO NOT COME AS A FRIEND!

GO ON, MY SKY-SPAWNED SLAVE--COMPLETE THE TASK I DEMANDED OF YOU--

DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

A TALE OF TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY BY:

ROY THOMAS AND LEN WEIN: WRITERS/EDITORS

RICH BUCKLER & JOE SINNOTT ILLUSTRATORS

JANICE COHEN colorist

JOHN COSTANZA letterer

FORGIVE ME, MY FORMER ALLIES--

--BUT I DO WHAT I MUST!

INDEED YOU DO, SURFER!

YOU SERVE DOCTOR DOOM --AS SOON ALL THE WORLD SHALL SERVE ME!

DON'T KNOW WHAT TURNED YOU AGAINST US, SPACE-MAN--

--BUT WHEN YOU ATTACK ONE OF THE F.F. -- YOU ATTACK US ALL!

PLEASE-- DO NOT OPPOSE ME!

YOUR STRUGGLES ONLY MAKE A PAINFUL TASK MORE DIFFICULT!

CURSE YOU, SURFER-- STOP PLAYING WITH THEM!

DO AS I COMMAND YOU--NOW!

BRACE YOURSELVES! THE SURFER IS GOING TO... ARRGH!

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!

CAUSE THEM PAIN, SURFER!

CAUSE THEM THE PAIN THEY SO LONG HAVE CAUSED ME!

HURT THEM! I WANT YOU TO HURT THEM, MY UNWILLING...

...PAWN.

YES...MY *PAWN!*

THE SILVER SURFER IS *INDEED* MY PAWN--

--AS *ALL* MEN ARE BUT PAWNS IN THE STRONG HANDS OF *VICTOR VON DOOM!*

ALL MEN, THAT IS-- SAVE THE INFERNAL *FANTASTIC FOUR!*

FOR YEARS, REED RICHARDS AND HIS ACCURSED COMPANIONS HAVE DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO *THWARTING* MY GREATEST *PLANS*-- MY SHREWDEST *SCHEMES*--

BUT NEVER AGAIN--AFTER *TODAY!*

ONCE BEFORE, I *STOLE* THE SURFER'S POWER*--BUT *WIELDING* SUCH POWER DOES NOT *BEFIT* A MAN OF *MY* STATURE.

NO, *CONTROLLING* THAT POWER IS FAR MORE TO MY *LIKING*-- AND BY CONTROLLING THE SURFER, HIS POWER IS... *EH?*

THE *VIEW-SCREEN*--! IT WILL ALL BE *OVER* SOON!

*BACK IN F.F. #57-60. --ROY & LEN.

MY BODY SEETHES WITH THE POWER COSMIC--

--AND WHEN THAT POWER IS FULLY UNLEASHED, IT WILL...

IT WILL...

NO!

THOUGH MY SOUL MAY WRITHE IN ETERNAL TORMENT--

--THE SILVER SURFER CANNOT KILL!

YOU INSUFFERABLE FOOL--!

KRUSHH

HOW DARE YOU WEIGH THE PAINS OF HELL AGAINST THE WRATH OF DOOM?

CALM DOWN, BEN! THERE MUST BE A REASON BEHIND THE SURFER'S ACTIONS--AND I'D LIKE TO HEAR IT!

THANK YOU, MY... FRIENDS. MY "REASON" HAS ITS BEGINNINGS SHORTLY AFTER I PARTED COMPANY WITH--THE DEFENDERS--!

BAH! I'VE HEARD ENOUGH OF YOUR SELF-LAMENTING DIATRIBES, SURFER!

I'LL HEAR THEM NO MORE!

KWA-ROOM!

YET, PERHAPS IN A SENSE THIS IS ALL **MY OWN FAULT.**

WHEN THE ACCURSED **SUB-MARINER** RESCUED ME, AFTER MY RECENT **FALL FROM SPACE***-- THE INCIDENT SPAWNED AN **IDEA** IN MY MIND--

* SEE **GIANT-SIZE SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP #1**, NOW ON SALE! --ROY.

--AN IDEA WHICH CAME TO **FRUITION** WHEN THE **SILVER SURFER** FAILED IN HIS LATEST ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE THE **EARTH'S GRAVITY**--! *

*LAST ISH. --R.

"HE STILL DOES NOT **SUSPECT** THAT I HAD BEEN **OBSERVING** HIM SECRETLY FOR WEEKS -- AND **GUIDED** HIS HEADLONG FALL HERE, KNOWING HE WOULD **ESCAPE** UNHARMED.

"MY WITLESS **PEASANTRY**, OF COURSE, FLED AT HIS APPEAR-ANCE...

"BUT THEN, UPON ENTERING MY **PALACE ROYAL**--

SHALLA-BAL! THEN YOU **ARE** HERE-- AS I WAS **TOLD!**

WE ARE **TOGETHER** ONCE MORE!

WH--WHO ARE **YOU?** WHAT DO YOU **WANT** HERE?

WHAT **WORDS** ARE THESE? DO YOU NOT **RECOGNIZE** ME, BELOVED? I--

NO, YOU COSMIC FOOL-- SHE DOES **NOT!**

YOU!!

AND, IF SHALLA-BAL NO LONGER **KNOWS** YOU, IT IS BECAUSE SHE NO LONGER **DESIRES** TO DO SO...

...WHICH IS AS IT **SHOULD** BE!

FOR, SHALLA-BAL IS NOW THE **WIFE** OF **DOCTOR DOOM!**

NO!

BY ALL THE WINDS OF FAR-FLUNG **SPACE**-- SUCH MADNESS **CANNOT BE!!**

HOW I *LAUGHED*, THEN, TO SEE HIS FUTILE *CONSTERNATION!*

HE VOWED TO *SLAY* THE FANTASTIC FOUR, IF I WOULD *RESTORE* SHALLA-BAL TO HIM.

BUT HE HAS *FAILED* ME, AND SO--

TIMESTOP: THERE ARE *SPEEDS* OF WHICH MAN MAY MERELY *DREAM*.

SUCH A SPEED HAS BROUGHT THE *SILVER SURFER* BACK...

NOR IS HE ALONE.

WHAT'S THIS??

THE SKY-RIDING SENTINEL HAS *RETURNED* ALREADY--

--WITH MY *GREATEST FOEMEN* APPARENTLY IN HIS *POWER?!*

IF YOU *DOUBTED* MY ABILITY TO DEFEAT THEM, DOOM, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE SOUGHT MY *HELP*.

TRUE, I COULD NOT BRING MYSELF SIMPLY TO *DESTROY* THEM--

BUT I HAVE PLACED THEM IN AN IRRESISTIBLE *HYPNOTIC TRANCE* --AND NOW LEAVE THEIR DISPOSAL TO *YOU!*

YOU MAY *EXAMINE* THEM, IF YOU WISH.

I ALREADY *HAVE*. IT IS THE WAY OF VON DOOM TO LOOK *BENEATH* OUTWARD APPEARANCES--TO SEE IF THIS IS PERHAPS SOME SORT OF *TRICKERY*.

BUT *NO*--THE SENSOR DEVICES WITHIN MY ARMOR ASSURE ME THEY ARE INDEED COMPLETELY *ENTRANCED* --UTTERLY *HELPLESS!*

I COULD *SLAY* THEM NOW--WITH A SINGLE *POWER BLAST!*

YET *YOU*, WHO HAVE TRAVERSED THE SPACEWAYS LIKE A *GOD*-- YOU COULD NOT BRING YOURSELF TO TAKE *FOUR PALTRY LIVES*--

I COULD *NOT*. AND, WHAT IS *WORSE*...

...I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER TO BE *ASHAMED*... OR *PROUD*.

--EVEN TO REGAIN THE *WOMAN YOU LOVE!?*

THEN ALLOW ME TO *ENLIGHTEN* YOU, MY FRIEND, IN THE WAYS OF *POWER!*

THIS IS POWER, YOU WHIMPERING *OAF!*

THE IMAGE OF A *BOOT*, STAMPING ENDLESSLY UPON THE UPTURNED FACE OF A *CRINGING HUMANITY--*

--OR AN *ARMORED HAND* ACROSS A QUIVERING *LIP!*

THIS IS POWER!!

YOU... MAKE THE MISTAKE... OF *ALL* YOUR SPECIES, DOOM.

YOU MISTAKE RESTRAINT FOR *WEAKNESS...*

...COMPASSION FOR *COWARDICE.*

I *MYSELF* AM NOT *ENTIRELY* WITHOUT POWER...

...POWER ENOUGH TO RIP THE VERY *STONES* FROM UNDER YOUR FEET, WITH A SURGE OF *COSMIC ENERGY!*

POWER ENOUGH TO *BUILD* A CITY!

POWER ENOUGH TO *SMASH* A WORLD!!

MINE IS A MERCY BORN OF *CHOICE*, NOT OF *WEAKNESS*...

OR ELSE I WOULD *CRUSH* YOUR FLESH, YOUR BONES, BENEATH YOUR VAUNTED *ARMOR*..

--AS EASILY AS I REND THIS LIFELESS MASS OF MAIL AND METAL!!

GRRAAKKK

DO I MAKE MYSELF *CLEAR,* VON DOOM?

VERY *IMPRESSIVE...* BUT, IN THE END, *MEANINGLESS.*

FOR, AS EASILY AS *YOU* CAN TEAR EVERY-THING *APART...*

...I HAVE BUT TO ACTIVATE THE AWE-SOME *ENERGY SOURCES* WITHIN MY ARMOR...

...AND *DOCTOR DOOM,* NO LESS THAN THE *SILVER SURFER,* CAN BE A *BUILDER...* A *RESTORER!*

DO I MAKE *MYSELF* CLEAR?

WE ARE *EQUALLY MATCHED,* THEN.

NOT *QUITE.* NOT WHILE *SHALLA-BAL* IS A BEAUTEOUSLY BLUSHING *BRIDE.*

WHILE I HAVE *HER*-- AND I *DO,* UNTIL I RELEASE HER *WILLINGLY*--

--I HAVE *YOU,* AND YOUR *POWER COSMIC,* AS WELL!

AND, AS *PROOF POSITIVE* OF THAT FACT, I NOW ORDER YOU TO *RELEASE* THE FANTASTIC FOUR FROM YOUR TRANCE-- ALL BUT *REED RICHARDS!*

AWAKEN THEM? BUT *WHY--?*

I HAVE MY *REASONS.*

NOW, DO AS I *SAY--*

--EVEN AS YOU *LEVITATE* THEM ALL TO THE *QUARTERS* I HAD PREVIOUSLY PREPARED FOR THEM!

WELL DONE, SKY-RIDER!

--*MEDUSA'S* MAGIC TRESSES, ENCLOSED IN A TRANSPARENT *BUBBLE--*

--AND *"MR. FANTASTIC'S"* OVERRATED MIND, WHICH *MIGHT* HAVE DEVISED AN ESCAPE, KEPT IN A STATE AS COMATOSE AS HIS ELASTIC *LIMBS.*

--AN *ELECTRO-RACK* WHICH MERELY *TIGHTENS* ITS STEELY GRIP UPON THE BRUTISH *THING--*

--EACH TIME HE BUT *MOVES--*

AN ENTIRELY *FLAMEPROOF* CAGE AND CHAMBER FOR OUR YOUNG *HUMAN TORCH--*

NOW IT SHALL *PLEASE* ME TO WATCH THEIR VAIN ATTEMPTS AT *ESCAPE--* BEFORE I FINALLY PUT THEM OUT OF THEIR *MISERY!*

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO *SHALLA-BAL,* THAT SHE CAN *WATCH* SUCH *CRUELTY--*

--IN ABJECT *SILENCE?*

AND *WORSE:* WHAT HAS AN UNCARING *WORLD* DONE TO *YOU--*

--THAT YOU COULD HAVE *CONCEIVED* IT?

REED RICHARDS KNOWS WHY HE IS A LIONIZED INCOMPETENT--WHILE MY GENIUS GOES IGNORED, AND I HIDE BEHIND A MASK OF LIFELESS METAL!

AND THE SECRET WILL DIE WITH HIM AND HIS FELLOW GLORY-HOUNDS...

...IN THE MOMENT THAT I AND I ALONE DECIDE!

A HAND, LAID SILENTLY, SOFTLY, UPON A GLEAMING METALLIC SHOULDER:

A SUDDEN SURGE OF REMEMBRANCE, IN ONE WHOSE MEMORY HAS BEEN WIPED CLEAN AS A SLATE...?

...OR...SOMETHING ELSE...?

WHILE, BACK IN THE DUNGEON...

REED! WAKE UP, STRETCHO!

S'NO USE, KID. DOC DOOM LET US THREE WAKE UP--JUST SO'S WE COULD SUFFER--

--BUT HE PUT THE WHAMMY ON YER EGGHEAD BROTHER-IN-LAW, BUT GOOD!

HE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE LEFT US UNDER THE SURFER'S SPELL, BEN--

--FOR ALL THE GOOD MY FLAME POWERS CAN DO US IN A PLACE WHERE EVERYTHING'S FIREPROOF!

IF ONLY I COULD SOMEHOW PICK THE ELECTRONIC LOCK WHICH PREVENTS MY HAIR FROM MOVING FREELY--!

HE PUT EACH OF US IN EXACTLY THE KIND OF TRAP FROM WHICH WE CAN'T BREAK FREE.

FACE IT, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS--WE'VE HAD IT!

SPLENDID! MATTERS ARE GOING PRECISELY AS I HAD PLANNED!

HOW EXHILARATING IT IS TO PLAY THE PUPPETEER ON THE GRAND STAGE OF LIFE AND DEATH!

DAEDALUS! YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT?

OF COURSE, MASTER...

...FORWARD, ALIEN!

SIT IN THAT CHAIR-- AND AWAIT THE MASTER'S PLEASURE!

HAH! YOU'RE NO BRAVER THAN ANY CRAVEN PEASANT, WHEN YOU FACE A LOADED PISTOL.

IF YOU THINK IT IS THE WEAPON WHICH COWS ME, LACKEY, THEN YOU ARE A FOOL.

THE REASON FOR MY COMPLIANCE STANDS YONDER.

IF NOT FOR SHALLA BAL-- HER FOR WHOM I HAVE BATTLED ARMIES AND CHALLENGED WHOLE PLANETS--

--YOU WOULD SWIFTLY LEARN HOW USELESS IS ANY EARTH-MADE FIREARM AGAINST THE STAR-SPAWNED SILVER SURFER!

SO YOU SAY--ALIEN!

EXCELLENT-- EXCELLENT! DAEDALUS DOES EXACTLY AS INSTRUCTED.

WITHIN HIMSELF, THE SURFER FUMES WITH RAGE--WITH SHEER, MADDENING FRUSTRATION--

--EMOTIONS WHICH I CAN PUT TO BETTER USE THAN HE.

FAR, FAR BETTER USE!

AND LAUGHTER ECHOES, FOR A LONG MALINGERING MOMENT, IN THE METAL-LINED CHAMBER OF DOCTOR DOOM...

WHILE...

HEY, FLAME-BRAIN!

SWING THAT BIRD-CAGE OF YERS OVER THIS WAY!

MOVE IT, KIDDO!

SURE, OKAY! BUT I DON'T SEE--

YA DON'T, HUH?

WELL, WITH REED OUTTA COMMISSION, SOMEBODY'S GOTTA DO THE HEAVY THINKIN' FOR THIS FOURSOME...

AN' I'M BET-TIN'--

--THAT DOOM-BABY--

--DIDN'T FIGGER--

--IT'D BE-- ME!!

WAY TO GO!

I CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP YOU, BEN...

SO REED BETTER BE NEXT.

YEAH--BUT HURRY, WILLYA? JUST DOIN' THAT-- MADE THESE CLAMPS GROW TIGHTER!

DUNNO-- HOW MUCH LONGER I-- CAN CAST--!

I'M HUSTLIN', BIG FELLA! AND, SINCE THAT PLASTI-GLASS THING AROUND REED IS FIREPROOF--

--I DON'T THINK ANYBODY'LL BLAME ME IF I USE THE DIRECT APPROACH!

YOU DID IT, JOHNNY!

HE'S SNAP-PING OUT OF IT!

SMAASSH!

WAKE UP, REED-- HURRY! BEN'S LIFE DEPENDS ON IT-- DO YOU HEAR ME--

--BEN'S LIFE!

I...HEAR YOU... JOHNNY.

IT'S...A SIMPLE... *POWER FEEDBACK* MECHANISM. I SHOULD BE ABLE...

THERE...!

THE PAIN *STOPPED!* STRETCHO, YER A *GENIUS!*

ON THE *CONTRARY,* OLD FRIEND. THE WHOLE THING WAS TOO *CONTRIVED...* TOO *SIMPLE.*

YOU SUSPECT ...A *TRAP?*

ALL *I* KNOW IS REED *LET* THE SURFER PUT THE FOUR OF US IN A *TRANCE--*

--FIGURIN' DOOM'S *EGO* WOULDN'T LET 'IM JUST *KILL* US WITHOUT GIVIN' US A *CHANCE.*

WELL, WE'RE *FREE* NOW--

SO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON YER COB-WEBBED *CASTLE,* DOOMSIE--

...'CAUSE TODAY, IT AIN'T LONDON BRIDGE THAT'S GONNA COME TUMBLIN' DOWN!!

EASY, BEN. DON'T LET YOUR ANGER MAKE YOU CARELESS!

IT'S DOOM THAT BETTER BE CARE-FUL, STRETCH.

HEY! THERE'S A DOOR-WAY--!

HOW ASTUTE OF YOU TO RECOGNIZE IT, YOU GREAT LUMBERING OAF.

DOOM! I MIGHT'A KNOWN YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SENSE ENUFF TO RUN FOR IT!

NOW, I'M GONNA--

YOU'LL DO NOTHING, FOOL, UNLESS YOU FIRST DEFEAT THESE:

MY LATEST EXPERIMENT IN DEATH-DEALING HUMANOIDS!

THEY LOOK TOUGH.

OH WELL--"C'EST LA VIE," AS MY FRENCH PROF ALWAYS SAID.

FLAME ON!

OR, AS MY DEAR OL' AUNT PETUNIA USETA SAY, ON DAYS WHEN SHE GOT TIRED OF CLICHÉS--

IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME!

PHOM!

I DON'T *LIKE* IT, REED.

DOC DOOM SAID THESE ANDROIDS WERE *NEW* MODELS...

BUT THEY DON'T *FIGHT* ANY DIFFER-ENT FROM HIS *OLD* ONES!

YOU *NOTICED* THAT, DID YOU, JOHNNY?

YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY BECOMING MORE *OBSERVANT* IN YOUR DECLIN-ING YEARS.

WHILE YOU THREE TRADE *WITTICISMS*, MAY I *RE-MIND* YOU--

THEY STILL *OUTNUMBER* US THREE TO ONE!

THAT'S WHAT OL' EGG-HEAD *MEANS*, 'DOOZY...

IF DOOM WUZ REALLY *SERIOUS* ABOUT USIN' THESE BARBIE DOLLS TO *TOTAL* US-- HE'D'A MADE THE ODDS *TWENTY* TA ONE!

LIKE IT *IS*, THEY'RE A *PUSH-OVER*.

ALL YOU GOTTA HAVE IS THE POWER OF A *SHERMAN TANK*, LIKE *ME*!

YOU ARE ALL *CORRECT*. THOSE ARE ALL *OBSOLES-CENT* MODELS, ALREADY EAR-MARKED FOR *DEMOLITION*.

I SIMPLY ENLISTED *YOU* TO DO THAT TASK *FOR* ME.

OH *YEAH*? WELL, THERE'S *ONE* THING I'M BETTIN' YOU *DIDN'T* WANT US TA TRASH--

--AN' THAT'S *YOU*!

DO IT TO IT, PAL!

MEANTIME, THE *REST* OF US'LL TAKE OUT THE GOOD DOCTOR'S *TINKER TOYS*--

--IN WHAT YOU CALL YOUR ONE SWELL FOOP!!

YA SEE THAT, TIN MAN? THAT'S TEAM-WORK, IS WHAT THAT IS.

SOMETHIN' YOU WOULDN'T KNOW NUTHIN' ABOUT, SINCE YOU DON'T CARE FOR NUTHIN' OR NOBODY BUT YERSELF!

NO TALK, HUH? OKAY-- ACTIONS SPEAK A LOT LOUDER'N WORDS ANY-HOW--

THAK!

--SO HERE'S A NATURAL-BORN SHOUT!

WHOOM

AW, NUTS.

WE SHOULD'A *KNOWN* IT WUZ JUST A *ROBOT.*

MAMA DOOM DIDN'T *RAISE* NO STUPID CHILDREN. IT'S *US* THAT'S THE *PRIZE CHUMPS.*

HE'S *PLAYIN'* WITH US-- LIKE SO MANY *TOY SOLDIERS!*

DON'T COUNT US OUT *YET,* OLD FRIEND.

THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* HAVE ONLY *BEGUN* TO FIGHT!

ON THE *CONTRARY,* MY UNHEARING ADVERSARY--YOU ARE NEARLY *DONE* FIGHTING--FOR ONCE AND FOR *ALL!*

TRUE, MY ROBOT ATTACK WAS A *NECESSARY* DIVERSION...YET IT FULLY *SERVED* ITS PURPOSE.

IT GAVE ME *TIME...*

...TIME TO MANEUVER THE UNSUSPECTING *SILVER SURFER...!*

...ONTO WHAT *HE* ASSUMES IS MERELY A *CHAIR...*

BUT, WHILE HE ALTERNATELY *RAGES* AND *DESPAIRS...*

...THE CHAIR IS *FEEDING* OFF HIS POWER...*STORING* IT...*ANALYZING* IT...

FTIK!

...SO THAT I CAN *DUPLICATE* IT FULLY IN A CREATURE OF MY *OWN* DEVISING...

...WITH THE MEREST PRESSING OF THIS *BUTTON!*

HOW *FITTING* THAT, ALTHOUGH THE *SURFER* HIMSELF WOULD NOT EXECUTE THE *FANTASTIC FOUR--*

SOON, *ANOTHER* SHALL DO IT--WITH HIS OWN *POWER COSMIC!*

NEXT: **CHECKMATE!**

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR™

THE NEW, IMPROVED, AND DEADLY
DOOMSMAN!
CAN IT DESTROY BOTH THE *F.F.* AND THE
SILVER SURFER?

BUCKLER SINNOTT

CARNAGE AT CASTLE LATVERIA!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

YOU'VE SEEN THE **OPENING GAMBIT**--PLUS THE **MIDDLE GAME!**

AND NOW.. THE ENDGAME COMETH!

PART ONE: CHECK...

I'VE **HAD** IT! FROM NOW ON, YOU THREE CAN FIGHT **DOC DOOM** ALL BY YER **LONESOMES!**

EVERY TIME I PUT THE **KIBOSH** ON 'IM, HE TURNS OUT TA BE A BLASTED **ROBOT!**

BUT DON'T YOU **SEE**, BEN? THAT JUST SHOWS WE'VE GOT THE **REAL** DR. DOOM ON THE **RUN!** IT PROVES--

NUTHIN'!

THAT'S WHAT IT PROVES, TWERP-- **NUTHIN'!**

ROY THOMAS *writer/editor*	RICH BUCKLER *artist/illustrator*	JOE SINNOTT *inker/embellisher*	P. GOLDBERG, *colorist* JOE ROSEN, *letterer*	LEN WEIN *Unindicted Co-conspirator*

DO YOU THINK BEN'S *RIGHT*, REED?

I'M AFRAID *SO*, MEDUSA. FOR REASONS ONLY *HE* KNOWS, DR. DOOM HAS BEEN *TOYING* WITH US ALL ALONG.

AN' THAT AIN'T *ALL*, HOT-STUFF...

...*THIS* OL' BOY'S BETTIN' THAT DOOM-BABY'S SITTIN' SOMEWHERE *SPYIN'* ON US...

...RIGHT THIS *MINNIT!*

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR MR. GRIMM.

SOON, HOWEVER, WITH *YOUR* HELP, I SHALL DO MUCH *MORE* THAN MERELY WATCH, SHALL I NOT?

ERE LONG, *YOU* SHALL FIGHT FOR ME THE *FINAL BATTLE* IN MY LONG AND BITTER *WAR-GAME* WITH THE ACCURSED *FANTASTIC FOUR.*

RIGHT NOW, THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES ONLY IN *CHECK*...

...YET SOON THEY SHALL LEARN THAT THEY ARE INDEED *CHECKMATED!*

IT WAS *INEVITABLE*, OF COURSE...

"...FROM THE MOMENT THE *SILVER SURFER* CAPTURED THEM FOR ME...

"...AND BROUGHT THEM HERE TO *LATVERIA*...

"...WHERE I *DELAYED* THEM WITH TACTICS ALL MY *OWN*...

"...WHILE, LIKE AN ANGEL UNAWARE, THE *SURFER* HIMSELF SAT IN A CERTAIN HARMLESS-LOOKING *CHAIR*...

...LITTLE *DREAMING* THAT THAT CHAIR WAS MERELY A DEVICE TO *DUPLICATE* HIS SO-CALLED *POWER COSMIC*...

...AND **CONCENTRATE** IT WITHIN A GIANT **ANDROID** OF MY OWN CREATION!

AH-- YOU **STIR**, DO YOU?

YOU LIVE!!

WHAT IS MORE, YOU ARE BLESSED WITH **ALL** THE SURGING ENERGY AND STRENGTH OF THE SKY-SPAWNED **SURFER**---

--YET YOU SHALL BE MY WONDROUS, WILL-LESS **SERVITOR!**

ONCE **BEFORE** I CREATED SUCH A BEING, WHOM I CALLED THE **DOOMSMAN.**

BUT **THIS** CREATURE FAR MORE **DESERVES** THAT APPELLATION.

ARISE, NEW AND DEADLY DOOMSMAN II--

ZZZ

--ARISE, AND SHOW YOUR POWER!!

IMPRESSIVE! YOU TORE THRU THAT WALL AS IF IT WERE MELTED BUTTER.

AND YOU COULD DISPOSE OF MY ARMOR NEARLY AS EASILY...

BUT YOU WON'T DO THAT, WILL YOU, MY DOOMSMAN?

NO, I DIDN'T THINK SO.

THIS IS THE WAY IT SHOULD BE-- THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE!

I SHOULD NEVER EVEN HAVE CONSIDERED ALLYING MYSELF WITH THE SUB-MARINER OR OTHERS OF HIS LESS ILLUSTRIOUS ILK.*

IT IS CONTROL WHICH I RELISH-- TO BE IN TOTAL COMMAND OF A SITUATION--

--THE PUPPETEER, PULLING THE STRINGS OF A HUMANOID--OR OF HUMANKIND ITSELF--

--BUT ALWAYS, ALWAYS IT IS DOOM WHO IS IN CHARGE!

*SEE GIANT-SIZE SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP #1, NOW ON SALE.-- ROY.

AND NOW, MY DOOMSMAN, YOU ARE COMPLETE-- WITH ALL THE SURFER'S STRENGTHS, AND NONE OF HIS INSIPID WEAKNESSES.

THUS, I NO LONGER NEED TO DRAIN THE ENERGIES OF THE TRUE SURFER.

...WHAT IS IT, WANDERER? YOU HAVE SEEMED FAINT THESE PAST FEW MINUTES.

I FELT--NO MATTER. IT IS ENDED NOW.

BUT-- "WANDERER"!?

IS THAT ALONE HOW YOU THINK OF ME NOW, SHALLA-BAL?

YOU--THE ONLY WOMAN I HAVE EVER LOVED?

BUT--AM I TRULY THAT WOMAN? I-- I DO NOT KNOW.

I'VE NO MEMORY OF ANYTHING--UNTIL A FEW DAYS AGO, WHEN I BECAME VICTOR VON DOOM'S BRIDE.

THUS FAR, IT IS A MARRIAGE IN NAME ONLY...

YET, HE'LL NOT RELEASE ME TO GO WITH YOU...TO LEARN IF PERHAPS I CAN BE AGAIN YOUR BELOVED SHALLA-BAL...

...UNTIL HE HAS DESTROYED HIS ENEMIES, THE ONES HE CALLS THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

AND SO I HAVE BETRAYED THEM INTO HIS HANDS--ALMOST THE ONLY HUMANS WHO EVER WERE KIND TO ME!

"OH, BETTER BY FAR THAT GALACTUS, MY FORMER MASTER, HAD SLAIN ME--

"--THAN TAKEN FROM ME THAT WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY GIVEN:

"THE POWER TO SOAR THRU THE TRACKLESS DEPTHS OF SPACE!

"FOR I HAVE BEEN TORMENTED BY THE THOUGHT THAT MY SHALLA-BAL WAS ON OUR DISTANT HOMEWORLD...

"...AND ALL THE TIME SHE WAS HERE, ON THIS SAME PRISON EARTH!

IT IS FORTUNATE, I SUPPOSE, THAT I NEVER MANAGED TO ESCAPE THE GREAT BARRIER SET UP BY GALACTUS TO KEEP ME ON THIS PLANET...*

*ISH #50, -- ROY.

...OR ELSE I MIGHT NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RETURN TO EARTH-- AND FIND YOU AGAIN.

YET, HAVE I FOUND YOU--WHILE YOU HAVE NO MEMORY OF WHAT ONCE WE WERE TO EACH OTHER?

I WISH...I WISH I COULD REMEMBER, NORRIN RADD...

NORRIN RADD? YOU CALLED ME--BY MY TRUE NAME!?

IT--IS? IT SIMPLY--SPRANG INTO MY MIND--!

NONE ON EARTH COULD KNOW THAT NAME--UNLESS SHE WERE SHALLA-BAL INDEED!

THEN--MY MEMORIES--

--MUST BE FAR ***CLOSER*** TO THE SURFACE OF YOUR MIND THAN DR. DOOM ***SUPPOSES!***

IT MUST HAVE OCCURRED WHEN YOUR ***HAND*** FIRST TOUCHED MY ***SHOULDER***, RESTORING THE ***COSMIC BOND*** BETWEEN US.

IF ***THAT*** IS TRUE... NORRIN RADD...

...THEN HOW MUCH ***MORE*** OF MY MEMORY SHALL BE RESTORED...

...BY ***THIS?***

*THERE ARE **OTHERS**, ALAS, WHO HAVE LITTLE **TIME** FOR SUCH ROMANTIC INTERLUDES...*

HE'S ***WATCHIN'*** US, I TELL YA. I CAN ***FEEL*** THEM BEADY LITTLE ***EYES*** ON US!

THERE'S NOT MUCH WE CAN ***DO*** ABOUT IT, OLD FRIEND, BUT KEEP ***MOVING.***

REED! I FOUND A ***NEW*** TUNNEL, DOWN ***THIS*** WAY!

GOOD ***GOING***, JOHNNY.

YEAH! THE MERIT BADGE IS ALL ***YOURS***, SQUIRT!

DON'T MIND ***HIM***, SON! JUST ***LEAD ON!***

BUT DON'T LET THAT ***MIGHTY MOUSE*** TRAIL OF YERS ***DIE OUT--***

--IT'S THE ONLY ***NIGHTLIGHT*** WE GOT!

DON'T WORRY, BLUE-EYES. NONE OF US IS GOING ***FAR.***

DEAD END!

BEN! YOU KNOW WHAT TO ***DO!***

I WUZ ***HOPIN'*** YOU WUZ GONNA SAY THAT, STRETCH...

...'CAUSE HERE'S WHERE I TOSS MY **SUNDAY PUNCH**, AN'--**YEEEOWWW!**

BEN! I JUST REALIZED--THAT **ISN'T** MERE ROCK AND MORTAR--BUT SOMETHING MUCH **HARDER.**

LOOKS LIKE YOU SHOULD'VE SAVED YOUR SUNDAY PUNCH FOR THE **WEEKEND,** BIG FELLA.

YOU JUST REALIZED IT!?

I'LL NEVER PLAY **SHORTSTOP** AGAIN!

JOHNNY! THIS IS NO TIME FOR **FRIVOLITY.**

THAT'S **UNDERSTATING** IT BY HALF, MEDUSA.

ANOTHER WALL--COMING DOWN **BEHIND** US!

NOW WE'RE SURROUNDED ON **SIX SIDES!**

WOOOMP!

AN' **I'VE** ALREADY SEEN THIS BIT ON THE **LATE LATE SHOW--**

--SO I KNOW **THIS** IS THE PART WHERE THE WALLS START **CLOSIN' IN** ON US!

RRR

FROM THE **SOUND** OF IT, OLD FRIEND...

...I'M AFRAID YOU'RE A BETTER **PROPHET** THAN A **CHEER-LEADER.**

COULDN'T I BE **WRONG**--JUST THIS **ONCE?**

RRRRRR

TORCH! BEN CAN'T HOLD THAT WALL BACK **FOREVER.**

NEGATIVE.

HAVING ANY LUCK WITH YOUR **FLAME?**

THIS TIME, DOC'S GOT US **HANDS DOWN!**

MAYBE **NOT.**

THESE **CREVICES**--THEY AREN'T **AIR-TIGHT.**

--THOUGH I'LL **END UP** LOOKING ...AS IF I JUST WENT THRU... THE WRINGER OF A **WASHING MACHINE!**

AND, WHERE A **DRAFT** CAN GO--**I** CAN GO--

THAT BROTHER-IN-LAW OF YERS BETTER *HURRY*, FLAMEBRAIN... OR IT'S *SARDINE TIME!*

HE'LL *FIND* THE STOP MECHANISM. I *KNOW* HE--

LISTEN! THE WALL *HAS* STOPPED!

AN' THERE GOES ONE'A THE *SIDE WALLS!*

DOOM'S PUT IN MORE SECRET PASSAGES THAN VINCENT PRICE EVER *THOUGHT* OF!

HEY! IZZAT *REED--*

--OR ONE'A OL' TIN-HEAD'S *ANDROIDS?*

TALK UP-- *FAST*--OR BENJY'S MAKIN' LIKE *O.J. SIMPSON!*

IT'S... *REED*, BEN...

YOU CAME ABOUT *THIS CLOSE* TA BEIN' *CLOBBERED*, BUDDY-- YOU *KNOW* THAT, DON'TCHA?

SORRY... BEN...

JUST HAD... A LITTLE TROUBLE GETTING MY *SHAPE* BACK...

MY *BREATH*, TOO.

COULDN'T... *ANSWER* YOU FOR A MINUTE THERE.

ANYWAY, I MANAGED TO CORRAL *THIS* PAIR.

WELL WELL *WELL* WELL WELL! LEASTWAYS *YOU TWO* AIN'T ROBOTS.

GIMME *TEN SECONDS* WITH 'EM, STRETCH, AN' *THEY'LL* TELL US WHAT DOOM'S GOT COOKIN'.

STOP, BEN! YOU KNOW DOOM TELLS HIS LACKEYS *NOTHING.*

JOHNNY-- LOOK OUT-- THAT *WALL--!*

I DIDN'T DO A *THING* TO IT-- *NO LIE!*

IT JUST SUDDENLY STARTED TO *GLOW.*

THERE'S SOMETHING *BEHIND* IT-- SOMETHING THAT RADIATES FEARSOME AMOUNTS OF *ENERGY--!*

CHAPTER II

ZUGZWANG!*

*LOOK IT UP. --RASCALLY.

NOT SOMETHING, FOOLISH HUMANS-- BUT SOMEONE!

I AM-- THE NEW, IMPROVED DOOMS-MAN!

AND I AM TRULY NAMED, FOR I AM YOUR DOOM!**

FWAM!

THAT VOICE! IT'S THE SURFER'S--

--BUT MAGNIFIED SOMEHOW-- FAR LOUDER-- MORE SINISTER--!

NEVER MIND THE CRITIQUE, BOSS-MAN.

JUST STAND ASIDE, 'CAUSE THERE'S SOMETHIN' I BEEN ITCHIN' TA SAY ALL DAY... AN' HERE GOES:

IT'S CLOBBERIN'--

**OKAY, OKAY, SO IT'S NOT A TERRIBLY ORIGINAL ENTRANCE LINE, EVEN FOR AN ANDROID -- BUT THEN, THIS PARTICULAR SPECIMEN IS ONLY ABOUT TEN MINUTES OLD. GIVE HIM TIME, ALRIGHT? --ROY.

TIII

AND AS FOR THE **BONA FIDE** SILVER SURFER...

SHALLA-BAL! WHAT **IS** IT?

YOU **KISSED** ME-- AND NOW YOU **SHRINK** FROM ME--!

BECAUSE-- I AM **NOT** WHO YOU **THINK** I AM!

WHAT DO YOU **MEAN**? YOUR LOST **MEMORY**--

--HAS **RETURNED** --STIRRED SOMEHOW BY YOUR **POWER COSMIC!**

AT LAST, I **KNOW** WHO I AM--

--AND I'M **NOT** SHALLA-BAL! I WISH I **WERE**--BUT I AM **NOT!**

THEN **WHO**--?

YOUR **FACE**-- YOUR **VOICE**-- THEY ARE THOSE OF MY **BELOVED**--!

YES--AND THAT IS **WHY** THE MASTER CHOSE ME TO **PLAY OUT** THIS GRIM CHARADE-- THIS DEADLY **GAME.**

"I AM **HELENA.** I AM BUT A POOR **PEASANT GIRL** OF LATVERIA, AND I HAD LIVED HERE ALL MY LIFE, IN UTTER **OBSCURITY**, UNTIL A FEW SHORT DAYS AGO, WHEN THE **MASTER** DISCOVERED ME--

COME, GIRL. I HAVE A **ROLE** THAT YOU MUST PLAY, AND PLAY **WELL**...

...AND WHEN **DOOM** COMMANDS --**ALL** WHO LIVE IN LATVERIA MUST **OBEY.**

I DON'T KNOW HOW HE MADE YOU **FALL**-- PRECISELY **HERE**, PRECISELY **NOW**-- BUT HE **DID.**

DON'T YOU **SEE**? HIS MACHINES MADE ME **THINK** I WAS SHALLA-BAL... BUT **DIMLY**, LIKE ONE IN A **FOG**...

...AND ALL SO THAT **I** MIGHT DESTROY FOR HIM... THE **FANTASTIC FOUR!**

CORRECT! AND NOW THE MASTER DOESN'T **NEED** YOU ANY MORE-- **ALIEN!**

HE WILL REWARD ME WELL FOR **DISPOSING** OF YOU BEFORE YOU BECOME AN **INCONVENIENCE.**

THE ONE CALLED **DAEDALUS!**

SHALLA-- OR **WHOEVER** YOU BE-- **STAND ASIDE!**

I WISH TO **SHOW** DOOM'S MINION--

--EXACTLY **WHY** I DO NOT CRINGE IN **FEAR.**

NAME OF A NAME! YOU **ABSORB** THE BULLETS--

KPAK KPAK

--AS IF YOU WERE EATING **CANDY!**

AN *AMPLE* ANALOGY, LACKEY.

AND JUST AS A *HUMAN* BODY TURNS SUCH FOOD INTO *ENERGY*, SO DOES THE *SILVER SURFER* TURN THE INGESTED METAL INTO-- *POWER!*

ARRR

NOW, GIRL, THOUGH I STILL DO NOT KNOW HOW YOU LEARNED MY *TRUE NAME*--

--FOR, I FEAR THAT, EVEN NOW, THE *FANTASTIC FOUR* MAY BE ENCOUNTERING *DIFFICULTIES*.

--THERE ARE *OTHER* MATTERS WHICH MUST TAKE *PRECEDENCE*--

YEAH... YOU *MIGHT* SAY THAT...!

BEN! ARE YOU *ALL RIGHT*? I'VE BEEN TRYING TO *DISTRACT* THAT ANDROID ASSASSIN--!

I'M... *GETTIN'* THERE, STRETCH.

JOHNNY! GET *AWAY!* YOU KNOW IF YOUR FLAMES WOULDN'T HARM THE *SURFER*, THEY WON'T FAZE THE *DOOMSMAN!*

THAT'S WHAT MY *HEAD* TELLS ME, LEADER MAN...

...BUT THE *REST* OF ME KEEPS RIGHT ON YELLIN'-- *"YOU GOTTA TRY!"*

AND--THE REST OF ME--WAS *WRONG*--AS PER *USUAL!*

I AM AS POWERFUL AS ALL FOUR OF YOU--

--SO YOU CANNOT HOPE TO *SURVIVE* MY ATTACK MUCH *LONGER!*

IF *THAT* IS TRUE, DOOMSMAN, THEN CONSIDER HOW THE *SCALES* MAY BE TIPPED--

--WHEN THE *SILVER SURFER* ENTERS THE FRAY!

*YOU! GET AWAY! I DO NOT **WISH** TO FIGHT YOU!*

WELL, WADDAYA *KNOW!* IT'S THE *CAVALRY* ON A BLASTED *SURF-BOARD!*

ALL WE NEED NOW IS *JOHN WAYNE!*

I AM NOT *CERTAIN,* BEN GRIMM...

FZAP!

WHUNK

...THAT I UNDERSTAND FULLY YOUR REFERENCE TO ONE OF YOUR *CULTURE HEROES.*

BUT, WHAT THE SURFER *CAN* DO, HE *SHALL*--TO UNDO THE *HARM* HE HAS CAUSED.

MISTER, YOU'RE DOING JUST *FINE!*

I *KNEW* I'D FINALLY GET A CHANCE TA *FINISH* SAYIN'--

GO ON, BENJY-- SING IT OUT!

OKAY, OKAY! IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

ALL RIGHT, CREW--ALL TOGETHER NOW--!

IT DOES HAVE A CERTAIN LILT, I MUST ADMIT.

THA-RAAK

SO MUCH FOR SON OF GODZILLA.

SAY HEY! THERE'S OL' GRILL-FACE, IN THE FLESH!

CAREFUL! DR. DOOM STILL HAS PLENTY OF POWER AT HIS DISPOSAL.

WELL PUT, RICHARDS! I HAVE SPENT A LIFETIME DESIGNING, BUILDING, RE-DESIGNING MY IMPERVIOUS ARMOR.

IT BRISTLES WITH WEAPONRY WHICH WOULD SINK THE MOST MODERN DESTROYER.

COME THEN! LET CRIES OF BATTLE FILL THIS CASTLE, NAY, THE LAND--

--AND HELL YAWNS WIDELY FOR THE FIRST FOOL WHO GASPS FOR QUARTER!

THAT SUITS **US** JUST **FINE**, METAL-MOUTH!

C'MON, GANG--LET'S MELT THIS JOKER DOWN AND **RECYCLE** 'IM!

YOUR **COURAGE**, JOHNNY STORM, IS **NEARLY** THE EQUAL OF YOUR **INDISCRETION**...

"A PITY THAT **NEITHER** OF THEM WILL BUY YOU THE **VICTORY** YOU CRAVE!"

UHNNH!

SKZAK!

WHAT IS **HAPPENING** IN HERE?

I HEARD THE SOUND OF **FIGHTING**--OF **DESTRUCTION!**

YOU GOT **20-20 HEARIN'**, GIRLIE-- **WHOEVER** YOU ARE!

'CAUSE, THAT TIN-HEADED TYRANT JUST ZAPPED MY PAL **TORCHIE**--

--AN' I'M GONNA **TAKE 'IM APART**, RIVET BY BLASTED **RIVET**, IF IT TAKES TILL--

YEEEOWW! THAT **SMARTS!**

YOU **JOLTED** MY FORCE FIELD-- EVEN **STUNNED** ME--

BUT IT WOULD TAKE AN **ATOM BOMB** TO BREAK **THRU** IT!

PLEASE-- ALL OF YOU--

YOU MUST **STOP** THIS SENSELESS BATTLE!

YOU'VE **NO RIGHT** TO DO WHAT YOU'RE DOING! **NO RIGHT!**

WHAT DO YOU **MEAN**, HELENA?

DON'T YOU **SEE**? YOU'RE EVENLY **MATCHED**--WITH POWER ENOUGH TO GO ON FIGHTING THIS WAY **FOREVER!**

AND WHILE YOU **DO**--YOU'LL **DESTROY THIS CASTLE**, AND ALL THE **ARCHIVES** IN IT--

--THE PRICELESS **TREASURE TROVE** OF A **NATION'S LEGACY!**

SHE IS *RIGHT*-- AND WE ALL *KNOW* IT!

EVEN IF ALL THESE THINGS MEAN NOTHING TO *DOOM* HIMSELF--WE'VE *NO RIGHT* TO ALLOW THEIR DESTRUCTION IF WE CAN *HELP* IT.

NOW *WAITAMINNIT!* THAT SON-OF-A-BOILER-FACTORY TRIED TO *WASTE* US!

BESIDES--I READ WHERE THIS WHOLE CASTLE *BLEW UP* A COUPLE OF YEARS BACK AN' WAS *REBUILT!**

**ASTONISHING TALES* 3.*--ROY

YES...WHAT YOU SAY IS *TRUE*...

BUT, AFTER IT *WAS* REBUILT, *ARCHIVES* AND *ARTIFACTS* FROM ALL OVER THE *KINGDOM* WERE BROUGHT HERE.

PAINTINGS-- *STATUARY*-- THINGS WHICH CAN *NEVER* BE REPLACED IF THE CASTLE IS DESTROYED A *SECOND* TIME!

WILL YOU *OBLITERATE* THAT HERITAGE? DO ANY OF YOU *DARE*??

IT'S *YOUR* SERVE, DOOM!

LET US GO IN *PEACE*, AND WE'LL CALL IT A *STALEMATE*-- TILL WE MEET YOU AGAIN IN SOME *NEUTRAL* COURT.

...OR IN A *DARK ALLEY!*

BEN!

YES--ALL RIGHT-- *GO*, ALL OF YOU!

THE OUTCOME OF THIS FIGHT MEANS *NOTHING* TO ME AT *ANY* RATE--NOW THAT MY NEWBORN *DOOMSMAN* IS IRREVOCABLY DEMOLISHED.

IT WAS THE *GAME* THAT COUNTED-- AND NOW, THAT IS *RUINED* FOR ME.

GET OUT OF MY SIGHT-- BEFORE I CHANGE MY *MIND!*

NEVER HAVE I KNOWN A *BLACKER HOUR!*

UP UNTIL THE *END*, I PLAYED THEM LIKE *PUPPETS*-- LIKE MINDLESS *PAWNS*--!

YET NOW, AT LAST, I FEEL *CHEATED*, SOMEHOW-- *USED*--

--AS IF, FOR *ONCE* IN HIS LIFE--VICTOR VON DOOM *LOST CONTROL* OF EVENTS!

NOT *QUITE* TRUE, MY DEAR UNHEARING DOCTOR.

FOR, IN TRUTH, YOU WERE *NEVER* FOR A MOMENT *IN* CONTROL OF THEM--!

FOR, HOW CAN A MERE *MORTAL* EVER HOPE TO GOVERN EVENTS--

--WHILE *MEPHISTO* STILL SITS HIS THRONE IN THE *NETHERWORLD*--

--TO *PLAY* THE ACTIONS OF MEN AND MAIDS AS IF THEY WERE THE MEREST OF *MARIONETTES*?

YOU ARE TRULY THE *WISEST* OF ALL, LORD OF EVIL!

SCHEME, DID YOU SAY, YOU QUIVERING DOLT?

BUT-- MAY *WE*, YOUR HUMBLE MINIONS, KNOW THE *FULL* WICKED GENIUS OF YOUR LATEST *SCHEME*--

--THAT WE MAY *WORSHIP* YOU THE MORE FOR IT?

MEPHISTO DOES NOT *SCHEME*--

HE *WEAVES*-- HE *SPINS*--

--AND *DARK AS THE PIT* IS THE *TAPESTRY* HE CREATES!

YET, GATHER *'ROUND* ME, YE SCUM OF THE LOWER DEPTHS-- THAT YOU MAY SEE MEPHISTO'S *VENGEANCE* UPON THE ONE HE MOST *DESPISES*--!

THEN, YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUE DEGREE OF *DIFFERENCE* BETWEEN YOUR LOWLY, LOATHESOME *SELVES*--

--AND *MYSELF*, WHOM YOU CALL *MASTER!*

BEHOLD *NORRIN RADD*-- WHOM THE WORLD KNOWS ONLY AS THE *SILVER SURFER*--

--THE BEING I *HATE* MORE THAN ANY--AND UPON WHOM I HAVE THIS DAY WREAKED THE MOST *TERRIBLE* OF REVENGES!

BUT, EMIR OF EVIL-- IF HE IS *LEAVING* THE SCENE OF BATTLE *UNHARMED*, AS IT APPEARS--

--DOES THAT NOT MEAN, RATHER, THAT HE HAS *ESCAPED* YOUR WRATH?

FIEND AND FOOL! THAT IS THE ULTIMATE *BEAUTY* OF MY DEVILTRY!

FOR, IN THE LAND OF LATVERIA, HE MET ONE WHOM HE FIRST THOUGHT TO BE HIS BELOVED, LONG-LOST *SHALLA-BAL*...

...*ONLY* TO LEARN THAT SHE IS BUT A POOR *PEASANT GIRL!*

BUT, IF THE GIRL IS *NOT* THE ONE HE SEEKS--

AH, BUT SHE *IS! SHE IS!!*

THE ONE WHO CALLS HERSELF *HELENA* IS TRULY *SHALLA-BAL*... THOUGH SHE HERSELF *KNOWS IT NOT!*

LONG AGO, WHEN LAST I *BANISHED* HER FROM THE SURFER'S SIGHT,* I DID *NOT* SEND HER BACK TO HER NATIVE PLANET *ZENN-LA*...

...BUT TO *LATVERIA*, WHERE I GAVE HER A *NEW* LAYER OF MEMORY OVER THE *OLD*...THE MEMORY OF A MERE *PEASANT WENCH!*

THUS, WHILE THE *SILVER SURFER* TRIES TO CONQUER *SPACE*, SO THAT HE MAY *REJOIN* HIS LOVE...

...HE DOES NOT *SUSPECT* THAT SHE IS ALL THE WHILE ON *EARTH* ITSELF!

HOW MUCH *GREATER* NOW IS THE SURFER'S *LONGING* FOR SHALLA-BAL THAN *BEFORE* HE ENTERED THE CASTLE OF VICTOR VON DOOM!

*S.S. #17. --R.

THEN, MASTER, WHEN THE ACCURSED SKY-RIDER ***STRIPPED AWAY*** THE GIRL'S MEMORY OF BEING ***SHALLA-BAL...***

...HE BUT PEELED AWAY ***ONE*** FALSE LAYER, TO ENCOUNTER A ***SECOND!***

BUT HE NEVER REACHED THE THIRD, ***TRUE*** LAYER--OF WHICH EVEN ***DR. DOOM*** KNOWS NOTHING.

AND THAT ***SLIP***-- WHEN SHE SPOKE THE SURFER'S ***REAL NAME***--?

MERELY MY WAY OF ***TANTALIZING*** MY NEMESIS-- OF DANGLING THE ***TRUTH*** BEFORE HIM, LIKE A PIECE OF ***BAIT***--

--ONLY TO ***WITH-DRAW*** IT, AND THUS ***INCREASE*** HIS AGONY!

SO ***GLIDE ON,*** NORRIN RADD...

*"--WITH EVEN **MORE** PAIN IN YOUR ALL-TOO-HUMAN HEART THAN YOU HAD KNOWN **BEFORE**--*

*"--AND WITH **NO HOPE** OF SORROW'S **END!***

*"AND, AS FOR THE **OTHERS**...*

THE GIRL ***HELENA,*** REED-- SHOULD WE TAKE HER ***BACK*** WITH US?

NO NEED, JOHNNY. DR. DOOM HAS NO REASON TO ***HARM*** HER...

AND THIS ***IS*** HER ***HOME,*** AFTER ALL!

SPEAKING OF WHICH-- ***COME,*** MY FRIENDS. IT'S TIME ***WE*** WERE GOING HOME...!

*"**YES,** REED RICHARDS! FOR, **YOU** HAVE A HOME--ALL THE **WORLD** HAS A HOME...*

...EVERYONE BUT THE TORTURED, TORMENTED ***NORRIN RADD!***

MINE MAY BE A RAGING, ALL-CONSUMING ***HELL***--

--BUT THE ***SILVER SURFER*** SHALL CARRY HIS HELL ***WITH*** HIM WHERE-EVER HE GOES-- ***UNTIL THE END OF TIME!***

AND THERE IS ***LAUGHTER*** IN HELL, FOR ABOUT THE SPACE OF HALF AN HOUR.

NEXT: OTHER WORLDS-OTHER PERILS!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

TM

THE MACABRE MENACE OF THE XEMU MERCILESS!

INVADERS OF THE 5TH DIMENSION!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

INVASION FROM THE 5TH (COUNT IT, 5TH!) DIMENSION

A FEW WEEKS BACK,* THE **THING** (NÉE BENJAMIN J. GRIMM) DRAGGED HIS FAVORITE GIRL TO A JETS **FOOTBALL GAME**. BUT TONIGHT, ALICIA HAS **TURNED THE TABLES**.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE-- THE **METROPOLITAN OPERA**?

YECCH! I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN **STAND** THAT STUFF, BABY.

OH, **BEN**, DARLING -- I'VE ALWAYS **LOVED** "MADAME BUTTERFLY."

PUCCINI'S MUSIC IS SIMPLY **HEAVENLY!**

573

YEAH? WELL, FOR ALL **I** CARE, IT CAN **STAY** UP THERE, OR IT CAN GO TA--

BEN!

WELL--!

THAT'S **BETTER**, MY DEAR SIR.

GIANT-SIZE F.F.#4--ROY.

AN EPOCH-MAKING EPIC CONCOCTED BY:

ROY THOMAS	*	RICH BUCKLER	*	JOE SINNOTT
WRITER/EDITOR		*ARTIST*		*EMBELLISHER*

JANICE COHEN, *COLORIST* * JOE ROSEN, *LETTERER*

OH WELL, AT LEAST I LEARNED ONE THING TONIGHT. I NEVER KNEW THAT THIS POOCHINI GUY WROTE THE "STAR-SPANGLED BANNER."

HE DIDN'T, BEN. HE MERELY USED IT AS WHAT'S CALLED A MOTIF.

SHEESH! SCRATCH ONE SOCIALLY-REDEEMIN' PURPOSE!

THERE HE IS!

I TOLDJA I SAW 'IM GOIN' INTA THE MET!

HEY, MR. THING-- YOU WANNA SIGN A FEW AUTOGRAPHS FOR ME AN' MY FRIENDS?

YOU BETTER WATCH THAT SNEAKIN' UP ON A GUY, KID.

I COULD'A THOUGHT YOU WUZ A MUGGER-- OR MEBBE DOC DOOM!

OH, WE GOT HIS AUTOGRAPH THE LAST TIME HE SPOKE AT THE U.N.!

YEAH, WELL... THAT'S WHAT THE WORLD'S COMIN' TO, I GUESS. YA CAN'T TELL THE GOOD GUYS FROM THE BADDIES WITHOUT A SCORECARD.

WHEN YA SIGN MINE, WILL YA WRITE--"TO MY EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED PAL, CHESTER FROM--"

AUTOGRAPHS

HOLD IT! HOLLLLD IT!

LISSEN, YER LUCKY I CAN EVEN GET A GRIP ON THIS ITTY-BITTY PENCIL, WITH MITTS LIKE MINE.

UH OH? NOW WHAT?

THERE, THERE, REGINALD--THE BIG UGLY MAN ISN'T GOING TO HURT YOU.

THAT SINKS IT!

PLIK!

C'MON, ALICIA HONEY-- WE'RE GRABBIN' THE FIRST BUS THAT COMES BY--

--EVEN IF IT'S THE DOWNTOWN EXPRESS TA YANCY STREET.

BEN-- PLEASE-- I--

YOU KNOW I CAN'T SEE--!

ULP!

SORRY, LADY-- IF THERE'S ONE PERSON IN THE WORLD THAT SHOULD REMEMBER THAT, BESIDES YOU-- IT'S ME!

WHY ELSE WOULD YA GO OUT WITH A CLUMSY KLUTZ THAT LOOKS LIKE HE JUST POPPED OUTTA A BRICK OVEN?

BEN GRIMM, NOW YOU JUST STOP FISHING FOR COMPLIMENTS, YOU HEAR?

I'M WITH YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU-- AND YOU KNOW IT.

I KNOW IT, ALRIGHT. I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT!

OH, YOU'RE IMPOSSIBLE--!

IMPOSSIBLE, ALICIA? NOT ANY MORE THAN A CERTAIN YOUNG-MAN-ABOUT-TOWN SOME BLOCKS NORTH AND EAST...

FACE IT, MR. STORM...

YOUR MOTHER'S MOUSTACHE

ADMISSION $3.00

THIS NEW SUIT OF YOURS IS RIGHT OFF THE RACKS AT GIMBEL'S EAST...

...AND RIGHT INTO THE HEARTS OF FEMALE AMERICA!

HMMM...NOT MANY PEOPLE OF ANY SEX IN HERE!

OKAY, SO I HAVEN'T PICKED THE INNEST SINGLES BAR IN THE BIG APPLE...

BAR

STILL, THERE'S BOUND TO BE SOME KIND OF ACTION--

WELL THEN THERE NOW --

HERE'S SOMEBODY WHO COULD HELP ME FORGET A CERTAIN HONEYMOONING INHUMAN FOR AN HOUR OR TWO!

YOU TALKING TO ME?

EXCUSE ME, MISS...

NO ONE BUT, GAL O' MINE!

I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU WERE WITH ANYBODY, OR --

SHE IS, BUDDY.

EVEN IF I WEREN'T, I COULDN'T SPARE ANY TIME FOR ANYBODY WHO USES PHRASES LIKE "GAL O' MINE."

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN SINCE 1948?

YOU SEE HOW IT IS, PAL... SO MOVE IT!

NOW LOOK, FELLA... I CAN TAKE REJECTION AS WELL AS THE NEXT MANIC-DEPRESSIVE-- BUT DON'T SHOVE!

WELL, WELL, DIG WHO'S COMING ON TOUGH.

LISTEN, I'LL DO ANYTHING I--

HEY! WHAT'S WITH YOU, ANYHOW?

YOU'RE STARTIN' TO-- SMOKE!?

OH NO! I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE GOT HOT UNDER THE COLLAR.

WHY ME, LORD...?

WHY ME??

THE PROBLEM OF TWO OTHER OF OUR PROTAGONISTS ARE SOMEWHAT LESS EPHEMERAL...

PLEASE, REED, I-- I'M NOT TRYING TO BE DIFFICULT...

I JUST DON'T KNOW IF I'M READY YET TO BECOME A FULL-TIME TEAM MEMBER AGAIN.

AND I'M NOT TRYING TO RUSH YOU, DEAR.

I KNOW YOU'VE TOYED WITH THE IDEA OF BECOMING A PRIVATE DETECTIVE ON YOUR OWN...

...AND WHO'D MAKE A BETTER SAM-SPADE TYPE THAN THE WORLD-FAMOUS INVISIBLE GIRL?

LOOK--YOU JUST DECIDE, AS SOON AS YOU CAN--AND THE REST OF US WILL ABIDE BY YOUR DECISION. YOU KNOW THAT.

YES. I'M ALL OVER FEELING OPPRESSED BY YOU AND THE OTHERS.

BUT, IT'S SO HARD-- TRYING TO FIND MYSELF-- THAT SOME-TIMES I WISH--

--I'D NEVER FOUND OUT I WAS LOST!

LASTLY, BECAUSE THERE ARE CURRENTLY FIVE MEMBERS OF THE FABLED FANTASTIC FOUR...

PUBLIC LIBRAR

...WE'VE MADAME MEDUSA TO LOOK IN ON, AS WELL.

BUT FRANKLY, SHE'S NOT REALLY DOING ANYTHING ALL THAT INTERESTING.

IT'S NOT A CONDITION DESTINED TO LAST MUCH LONGER.

FOR MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE FAR-FAMED BAXTER BUILDING--

--A STRUCTURE RANKING THIRD ONLY TO THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING AND THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AS A FUN CITY TOURIST ATTRACTION--

--AND WHICH, RIGHT NOW, LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT BE **CATCHING UP.**

FOR, AT PRECISELY 12:32 A.M., THE **HUMAN TORCH** DESCENDS TOWARD ITS SKY-SCRAPING ROOF...

...WHILE PRECISELY AT **12:31 A.M.**, A SUDDEN YET STRONG **WIND** HAD BEGUN TO WHIP THRU THE STREETS WHICH **SURROUND** THE F.F.'S MIDTOWN HQ.

SIDELIGHT: THERE ARE ALWAYS A **FEW** UNSAVORY CHARACTERS AFOOT IN NEW YORK, EVEN IN THE SHADOW OF THE **BAXTER BUILDING.**

ONE OF THESE IS **BARNEY SLOCUM**, AN EX-MARINE, DOWN ON HIS LUCK.

SOME DAY, PERHAPS, WE'LL **HEAR** HIS HEART-RENDING STORY...

...BUT **NOT TONIGHT!**

YYIPE!!

THWAM!

THIS EVENING'S SPOTLIGHT BELONGS TO THE FAST-STREAKING PHENOMENON KNOWN AS **QUICKSILVER**--CHRISTIAN NAME, **PIETRO.**

ONCE, HE WAS A **FOE** OF THE EXTRAORDINARY **X-MEN**...THEN, A TURBULENT MEMBER OF THE MIGHTY **AVENGERS.**

NOW, HE IS **MUTANT-IN-RESIDENCE** AT THE HIDDEN LAND OF THE UNCANNY **INHUMANS**, HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD.

SO WHAT'S HE DOING **HERE**--?

FRANKLY, WE DON'T KNOW EITHER -- AND WE'RE FRESH OUT OF THOUGHT BALLOONS--

--SO WE'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO RESORT TO A LITTLE OLD-FASHIONED EAVESDROPPING:

PIETRO REPORTING TO GREAT REFUGE...

COME IN, GREAT REFUGE...!

GREAT REFUGE HERE.

HAVE YOU PUT PLAN "M" INTO OPERATION YET?

NEGATIVE. YOUR TELEPORTATION DEVICE SET ME DOWN FURTHER FROM THE CITY THAN I HAD THOUGHT.

THUS, REQUEST MORE TIME FOR RECONNAISSANCE...

DENIED! YOU WILL BEGIN ASSAULT PHASE AT ONCE...

...OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES! THAT IS ALL.

WAIT! WHAT IF--?

AND SO, WITHOUT A WORD, THE SUPER-FAST MUTANT RACES OFF, SETTING SPEED RECORDS FOR THE NON-LINEAR DASH.

BUT THE DISC-SCREEN GOES BLANK...

ZOOSH

THOUGH, ALAS, THERE ARE NONE ABOUT TO TAKE NOTE OF THAT FACT.

NOR IS THAT HIS DESIRE AT THE MOMENT.

FEW CAN KNOW OF THE SECRET ENTRANCE TO THE BAXTER BUILDING, WHICH WAS ONCE AN UNCOMPLETED SUBWAY TUNNEL.

BUT PIETRO KNOWS, AND ENTERS IT UNERRINGLY.

IN A PRE-SET ORDER, HE TOUCHES CERTAIN BRICKS... AND A MASSIVE DOOR OPENS, WHERE EVEN HE HAD NOT SEEN A DOOR.

THIS SEQUENCE OF EVENTS TAKES EXACTLY ONE MINUTE...

--AND YOU ALL REMEMBER WHAT **THAT** MEANS.

GREAT TO BE **HOME** AGAIN... IT SAYS **HERE!**

ME FOR A NICE HOT **SHOWER...**

...AND A LITTLE **CRIME PATROLLING,** JUST TO KEEP MY **HAND** IN.

"**GREAT** WAY FOR A SWINGIN' YOUNG BACHELOR TO SPEND **FRIDAY NIGHT,** BUT AFTER ALL...

"...WHAT **OTHER** ACTION'S GONNA COME MY WAY TONIGHT?"

FOR, AS YOU DRAW THE BLINDS, AND THINK AGAINST YOUR WILL OF THE **GIRL YOU LOVED,** BUT WHO MARRIED **ANOTHER...**

...AS YOU HURRIEDLY **SHOWER,** WITH WATER HOT ENOUGH TO **SCALD** ANY LACKING YOUR **FLAME POWERS...**

...YES, EVEN AS YOU **DRESS,** AND WONDER WHY YOU CAN'T FIND A NICE, **NORMAL** GIRL TO SQUIRE...

--SWIFT-FOOTED **DESTINY** IS WAITING:

IT'S ABOUT **TIME** YOU WERE FINISHED, JOHNNY STORM!

FUNNY YOU SHOULD **ASK,** JOHNNY...

YOU--HERE!?

AND WHERE SHOULD I BE-- IF I SEEK ONE OF THE SO-CALLED FANTASTIC FOUR?

SIT DOWN! I HAVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU-- AND THEY CANNOT WAIT.

YEAH? SINCE WHEN DID YOU START ORDERIN' THE HUMAN TORCH AROUND?

SINCE IT BECAME IMPERATIVE THAT I DO SO, STORM.

NOW, I'VE NO MORE TIME TO WASTE! I WANT-- YEEOW!

DIDN'T MAGNETO EVER TEACH YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH MATCHES, QUICKIE?

YOU DELIBERATELY BURNED ME--MELTED MY COMMUNI-DISC!

MISTER, I DON'T WHAT IN BLAZES YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

ALL I KNOW IS, I WORKED HARD PLAYING THE GOOD LOSER WHILE YOU MARRIED THE GIRL I WAS IN LOVE WITH...

...HECK, I EVEN MADE NICE WITH YOU AT THE WEDDING...

...BUT THERE'S NOTHING SAYS I VE GOTTA PUT UP WITH YOU ON MY OWN TIME!

NOW, YOU'RE MAKING ME LOSE MY TEMPER, LITTLE MAN...

SO YOU JUST SCOOT ON OUT OF HERE THE SAME WAY YOU SCOOTED IN...

...BEFORE I SINGE YOUR TAIL!

PERHAPS YOUR FIRE-BALLS COULD HARM ME--IN THE CONFINES OF YOUR OWN FIREPROOF ROOM--

BUT, OUT HERE IN THE LARGER LABORATORY AREA--

--YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER OVERRATED *ALSO-RAN!*

OR DIDN'T YOU *KNOW* WHY MEN HAVE NAMED ME-- *QUICKSILVER!*

SO--YOU ARE *STILL* NOT CONVINCED THAT YOUR FLAME POWERS ARE *USELESS* AGAINST ME?

OH, I'M *CONVINCED*, ALL RIGHT--

--CONVINCED YOU'RE A ONE-MAN *YELLOW STREAK!*

I'M NO EXPERT IN YOUR AMERICAN *SLANG*, TORCH, BUT I KNOW WHAT THAT REMARK *MEANT*--

--AND I *DIDN'T LIKE IT!*

UHNN

*SO **SWIFTLY** DOES PIETRO'S **GLANCING BLOW** STRIKE HIS OPPONENT'S JAW, THAT THERE IS NO TIME FOR THE MUTANT'S **FIST** TO BE BURNED...*

*THUS, JOHNNY STORM IS SUFFERING A CERTAIN, IF TEMPORARY, **LOSS OF FACE** WHEN SUDDENLY--*

GOOD LORD! WHAT IN--?

THIS AIN'T EXACTLY THE *PRETTIEST* SIGHT EVER GREETED MY BABY-BLUES WHEN I STEPPED OFF THE ELEVATOR.

LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY'S HAVIN' A *FREE-FOR-ALL* UP HERE--AN' THEY INCLUDED ME *OUT!*

IT'S *QUICKSILVER!* HOLD IT, BEN!

WE DON'T KNOW *WHY* HE--

WE KNOW *ENUFF*, BIG MAN.

WE KNOW HE JUST KNOCKED THE STUFFIN'S OUTTA THE *HUMAN TORCH*--

AN' *NOBODY* DOES THAT TO MY HOT-HEADED LITTLE BUDDY--'LESSEN IT'S *ME!*

SO *SLOW DOWN*, SPEEDY GONZALEZ!

JUDGMENT DAY'S A-COMIN'!

TOO LARGE-- TO GO *AROUND* IN TIME!

WE'RE GOING TO *HIT!!*

DON'T MAKE A *BIG DEAL* OUT OF IT, WHITEY.

I CAN STOP YOU WITH *ONE* HAND-- AN' WITH THE *OTHER*--

STRIKE, THEN! I WOULD RATHER *PERISH*, THAN ASK AID OF SUCH AS *YOU*.

BEN! I SAID *HOLD IT*--

--AND I *MEAN* IT!

AWRIGHT, *AWRIGHT*--WE'LL PLAY IT *YOUR* WAY, STRETCHO.

I DID NOT *COME* TO SEE THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

I CAME FOR-- *MEDUSA*.

BUT THIS GATE-CRASHER BETTER HAVE A *GOOD REASON* FOR ATTACKIN' THE *FANTASTIC FOUR!*

ME? BUT *WHY*?

BECAUSE YOU ARE-- *ONE OF US*.

YOU ARE AN *INHUMAN* --EVEN AS *I* NOW AM, IF ONLY BY *SPECIAL DECREE*.

OUR LEADER *BLACK BOLT* HAS NEED OF YOU, MEDUSA.

BLACK BOLT? *WHY*? YOU MUST *TELL* ME, PIETRO!

AND I *SHALL*-- NOW THAT I HAVE A *CHANCE*...

"AS YOU KNOW, YOUR COUSIN *CRYSTAL* AND I FELL IN LOVE--AND WERE *WED* THIS SUMMER PAST.

"IT WAS THE *FIRST* TIME IN LIVING MEMORY THAT AN *INHUMAN* HAD MATED WITH AN *OUTSIDER*...

"...EVEN IF, BEING A *MUTANT*, I AM PHYSICALLY QUITE *SIMILAR* TO THE INHABI-TANTS OF THE GREAT REFUGE.

"IT WAS A *SPLENDID* CEREMONY-- WITH THE *AVENGERS* PRESENT, AS WELL AS YOU OF THE *FANTASTIC FOUR*...

"...ESPECIALLY AFTER *MAXIMUS THE MAD* WAS SAFELY LOCKED AWAY, HIS PLAN TO *DISRUPT* THE PROCEEDINGS A DISMAL *FAILURE.**

*AS SEEN IN *AVENGERS* #127 AND *F.F.* #150.--ROY.

"THERE WAS *REJOICING* THAT DAY IN THE CITY OF *ATILLAN*...AND *REVELRY* FAR INTO THE *NIGHT!*

"AND THE WEEKS PASSED, IN *PEACE* AND *TRANQUILITY* SUCH AS A HOMELESS *MUTANT* HAD NEVER BEFORE KNOWN.

"YET, THINGS WERE NOT DESTINED TO *REMAIN* SO.

"FOR, ONLY *TWO NIGHTS GONE*, THE SERENITY OF OUR HIDDEN LAND WAS *SHATTERED*...

"...BY THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE, WITHIN THE *PALACE ROYAL* ITSELF OF A VIRTUAL *ARMY!*

"THEY CAME FROM OUT OF *NOWHERE* ...INTO THE *HERE* AND *NOW*...

"...TO WREAK *HAVOC* AMONG THE UNSUSPECTING *ROYAL GUARDSMEN* THEY ENCOUNTERED.

FZZAP!

"THE DYING GUARD'S *SCREAM* AROUSED THE PALACE--YET HE *DIED*, NEVER KNOWING THE *NAME* OF HIS KILLER:

"THE NAME OF *XEMU*--

"--MASTER OF THE *FIFTH DIMENSION!*

"WE DID NOT *KNOW* HIS IDENTITY, OF COURSE, WHEN WE *FACED* HIM THERE IN THE *HALL OF HEROES.*

"NOR DID EVER THAT CORRIDOR MORE *DESERVE* ITS NAME...

"FOR, *BLACK BOLT* WAITED THERE-- AND *KARNAK*, AND *GORGON*-- ALL STANDING FIRM AGAINST THE *FOE-MEN* WHO HAD STRUCK FROM THE *VOID.*

"YET, KARNAK RECEIVED NO OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER HIS SPINE-SPLINTERING *BLOWS*--FOR THE INVADERS HAD PLANNED THEIR ATTACK *WELL*--

SHWIPP

"--AND STRUCK HIM DOWN FROM A *DISTANCE!*

"*GORGON*, TOO, FELL--BEFORE HIS THUNDERING *HOOF* COULD SET THE VERY *EARTH* A-TREMOR!

"THEN, A SEARING *SHOCK WAVE* FELLED THE *REST* OF US.

"PERHAPS IT HAD ENDED *DIFFERENTLY* --IF WE HAD A FEW MORE MINUTES' *WARNING*--

"BUT-- THINGS *WERE* AS THEY *WERE.*

"ONLY *TRITON* THEN REMAINED FREE-- FOR HE HAD BEEN ASLEEP IN HIS OWN *DAMPER* QUARTERS...

"SENSING THAT HE COULD NOT PREVAIL ALONE, HE *TURNED* FROM THE FRAY--THOUGH I KNOW IT *GALLED* HIM TO DO SO--

"--RACING OFF TOWARD ATILLAN'S *CENTER*--

"--AND THE *BOTTOMLESS FOUNTAIN* THERE!

"LEGEND SAYS THERE IS NO END TO THIS FOUNTAIN...

"...THAT IT REACHES DOWN TO CAVERNS MEASURELESS TO MAN AND INHUMAN ALIKE.

"TRITON DID NOT KNOW IF THE LEGENDS WERE TRUTH OR LIES.

"BUT, THIS NIGHT, HE WOULD FIND OUT!

"WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM, NO ONE KNOWS--BUT SOON, WE FACED AN ANGRY, POWER-MADDENED CAPTOR--

YOU! I HAVE OBSERVED YOU. YOU ARE NO INHUMAN--AND I WILL SET YOU FREE--

--IF YOU WILL DIVE AFTER THE AMPHIBIAN, AND BRING HIM BACK TO ME!

I AM AN INHUMAN... SINCE THE DAY OF MY MARRIAGE.

FROM THAT DAY UNTIL FOREVER, I WILL LIVE OR DIE--AN INHUMAN!

THEN YOU SHALL DIE, WHEN IT PLEASES XEMU!

"XEMU! AT LAST WE KNEW OUR ENEMY'S NAME, IF NOTHING ELSE.

"AND SOON, ALL OF US WERE GATHERED TOGETHER--EVEN THE CAPTIVE BLACK BOLT--

YOU DARE TO CHAIN OUR MONARCH BORN?

ATILLAN IS MINE NOW--BY RIGHT OF CONQUEST!

I AM SOVEREIGN HERE NOW--

--NOT THIS SHACKLED, HELPLESS MUTE!

HELPLESS? WE'LL SHOW YOU WHO IS--ARRRH!

PLACE HIM UNDER AN ANESTHO-RAY, THAT HE MAY DISTURB US NO FURTHER!

YOU SEE, BLACK BOLT? I'VE NOT COME UNPREPARED FROM MY BASE IN WHAT EARTHMEN WOULD CALL IN THEIR INADEQUATE WAY--THE FIFTH DIMENSION.

THAT METAL CLASP BOTH ROBS YOU OF YOUR FORMIDABLE VOCAL PROWESS...

...AND DRAINS OFF THE ELECTRON POWER YOU COULD OTHERWISE ABSORB FROM THE VERY AIR!

NOW, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I SHALL SHOW YOU WHY I HAVE ATTACKED YOUR KINGDOM--ALL BUT UNKNOWN TO THE EARTH AT LARGE.

BUT FIRST, YOU MUST SEE AND MARVEL AT--

...THE THUNDER HORN!

A SOMEWHAT *MELODRAMATIC* APPELLATION, I'LL ADMIT--YET ONE QUITE IN KEEPING WITH THE WAY OF *YOUR* WORLD, WHICH *XEMU* HAS LONG OBSERVED FROM AFAR!

XEMU!

OF COURSE! *NOW* I RECOGNIZED THAT HATED NAME!

THE *HUMAN TORCH* SPOKE OF YOU--DURING ONE OF HIS LONGER *STAYS* HERE.*

AYE! HE SAID YOU WERE A RUTHLESS *TYRANT*--

--A *MADMAN* WHOSE AMBITION WAS TO RULE *WORLDS BEYOND WORLDS!*

*JOHNNY STORM ENTERED THE FIFTH DIMENSION IN *STRANGE TALES* #103, THOUGH YOU'RE PROBABLY MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY FROM THE MORE RECENT *HUMAN TORCH* #3--ROY.

AND HE WAS QUITE **CORRECT**--

--SAVE ONLY FOR HIS MISJUDGMENT OF MY **MENTAL STATE**.

FOR, IS IT **MAD** TO WISH TO CONQUER A **UNIVERSE OF DIMENSIONS**--WHEN IT IS **WITHIN YOUR POWER** TO DO SO?

BUT, LET ME DEMONSTRATE TO THE MORE **SKEPTICAL** AMONG YOU-- WITH MY **SASER WEAPON!**

STRANGELY **SILENT** *NOW, XEMU STEPS* **BEHIND** *THE GIGANTIC, NOW-FULLY-MATERIALIZED MECHANISM...*

...TO SHOUT A SINGLE, SHRIEKED **SYLLABLE**.

THERE IS **NO SOUND** *AMID WHAT HAPPENS NEXT...*

...BUT THE RESULTS ARE QUITE **GRAPHIC!**

BTOOM!

GENES OF AGON!

HE DESTROYED A **MOUNTAIN-TOP**...WITH **ONE WORD!**

IT'S **CLEAR**, NOW, WHAT "**SASER**" MEANS: **SOUND AMPLIFICATION BY STIMULATED EMISSION OF RADIATION!**

HIS DEVICE MAGNIFIES **SOUND**--AS A **LASER** BEAM DOES **LIGHT!**

GIVE THE NOD, BLACK BOLT-- AND WE'LL **FIGHT BACK** AGAINST THIS LUNATIC-- THOUGH WE **PERISH** IN THE ATTEMPT!

YOUR LEADER DOES **NOT** NOD-- BECAUSE YOU WOULD PERISH **BEFORE** YOU COULD MAKE SUCH AN ATTEMPT.

BUT HE **ALSO** SEES NOW **WHY** I CHOSE TO INVADE THE **HIDDEN LAND!**

IF THE THUNDER HORN WILL DO THAT POWERED BY **MY** VOICE--

--WHAT WOULD IT **NOT** DO WHEN ACTIVATED BY THE VOICE OF-- **BLACK BOLT??**

NOW, YOU WILL MAKE A ***SIGN***-- AS A ***VOW*** THAT YOU WILL SERVE ME ***FAITHFULLY*** IN THIS MATTER...

OR ELSE, FIRST THESE ***OTHERS***-- THEN ***YOU*** YOURSELF-- SHALL ***DIE!***

GREAT ***XEMU***...

REMEMBER THAT OUR ***PSYCHIC PROBES*** INDICATED THAT ORDINARY ***THREATS*** WOULD HAVE ***NO EFFECT*** UPON BLACK BOLT.

FORTUNATELY, THEY ***ALSO*** ASCERTAINED HIS ONE POTENTIAL ***WEAKNESS.***

YES! IN MY EAGERNESS, I NEARLY ***FORGOT.*** THOUGH BLACK BOLT ***LOVES*** HIS STRANGE PEOPLE, I KNOW HE WOULD ALLOW THOSE THOUSANDS TO BE ***DECIMATED***--

--BEFORE HE WOULD HELP TO SUBJUGATE ***UNTOLD BILLIONS!***

YET, PARADOXICALLY, A MAN WHO MAY SACRIFICE ***MULTITUDES,*** EVEN ***ROYAL COUSINS,*** MAY FIND HIMSELF ***INCAPABLE*** OF STANDING BY AND WITNESSING THE DEATH OF ***ONE*** PERSON--

--***IF*** THAT PERSON IS THE ***RIGHT*** ONE!

YOU WILL TRAVEL TO THE LAND CALLED ***AMERICA*** --AND BRING BACK THE ***WOMAN*** WHOM YOUR ADOPTED MONARCH ***LOVES***--

YOU! MUTANT--!

--THE ONE CALLED ***MEDUSA!***

PREPARE YOURSELF--OR YOUR YOUNG ***BRIDE*** PERISHES ***INSTANTLY!***

"HELPLESS TO STRIKE WHILE THE OTHERS WERE HELD HOSTAGE, I STEPPED ABOARD XEMU'S ***DIMENSIONAL TRANSPORTER***...

"A MOMENT LATER, I ***FELT*** AS MUCH AS ***SAW*** THE BLINDING FLASH...

"AND THEN, TRAVERSING THE SPACE BETWEEN ***HEARTBEATS***...

"...I STOOD SUDDENLY IN A ***SWAMPY AREA*** OF WHAT YOU NAME ***LONG ISLAND!***

"I RACED ***CITYWARD,*** AS SWIFTLY AS POSSIBLE..."

HMMM...XEMU'S **D-MACHINE** MUST HAVE A BUILT-IN **AFFINITY** FOR THAT AREA. THAT'S WHERE **JOHNNY** FIRST ENCOUNTERED HIS MINIONS, SEVERAL YEARS BACK.

BUT, WHEN YOUR **SHACKLES** WERE REMOVED, PIETRO-- WHY DIDN'T YOU **LASH OUT**?

I--**TOLD** YOU! IF I HAD-- THEY'D HAVE SLAIN **CRYSTAL** FIRST!

AS THEY WILL SLAY **MILLIONS**, PERHAPS-- IF SOMEHOW THEY SUCCEED IN BREAKING BLACK BOLT'S **IRON WILL**!

SURELY **YOU** UNDERSTAND, MEDUSA! SHE IS YOUR OWN **COUSIN**--

AND **YOUR** OWN **WIFE**!

I KNOW YOU WOULD DO **ANYTHING** TO PROTECT HER-- EVEN **LIE**!

WAITAMINNIT, RED! DOES THAT MEAN YOU FIGGER PIETRO MIGHT NOT BE ON THE **UP-AN'-UP**?

WHY, THAT **CRUDDY**--!

STOP, BEN! THINK OF WHAT **YOU** MIGHT BE CAPABLE OF DOING-- IF **ALICIA'S** LIFE WERE AT STAKE.

¦ULP!¦ I... SEE WHATCHA MEAN.

WELL, WE'VE GOT TO DO **SOMETHING!** WE CAN'T JUST LET THEM KILL **CRYSTAL**--AND THE **OTHERS**, OF COURSE--!

AN' WE AIN'T **GONNA!** SADDLE UP OUR OL' FAITHFUL **ICBM**, STRETCHO--

WE'RE GOIN' **DOWN HOME** WITH **SONNY-BOY** HERE!

NO! YOU MUST **NOT!** THEY'LL KILL **CRYSTAL** IF--

PIETRO-- I'LL SAY ONLY **THIS** TO YOU-- AND I'LL SAY IT BUT **ONCE**:

WHAT WOULD **CRYSTAL** WANT YOU TO DO??

*AT MEDUSA'S WORDS, THE SILVER-CLAD MUTANT GROWS ABRUPTLY **SILENT**.*

REED, SURELY THIS **XEMU** MUST HAVE **SUSPECTED** WE'D RETURN WITH PIETRO. WHAT IF--?

A **TRAP**? MORE THAN **LIKELY**.

YOU STAY **HERE**, HONEY, WHILE WE--

NOT "**WE**" HONEY! **YOUR** PLACE IS **HERE** WITH **FRANKLIN**.

THIS IS A JOB FOR **FULL-TIME** F.F. MEMBERS-- **PERIOD**!

*SURPRISINGLY, SUE VOICES NO **OBJECTIONS**, TO REED'S OVERLY PROTECTIVE RHETORIC--AND SO SCANT MINUTES LATER*

ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE--STRAP YOURSELVES IN, **PRONTO**--

WE'RE GOING FOR BROKE!

FFROOOOM

NEXT: THE **RAGE** OF **BATTLE!**

FANTASTIC FOUR

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

GUEST STARRING: THE UNCANNY INHUMANS!

SHOCK AFTER SHOCK AWAITS YOU WITHIN THESE PULSATING PAGES!

BUCKLER & SINNOTT

HAVOC IN THE HIDDEN LAND!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR! ™

MIDNIGHT IN MANHATTAN: ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE **LOOK UP** FOR A MOMENT FROM THEIR AIMLESS, POINTLESS **SCURRYINGS**--LOOK UP, AND ARE **WARMED** BY THE ROCKET'S BATHING **GLOW.**

THEN, THEY **LOWER** THEIR HEADS ONCE MORE, AND THEIR HALF-DREAMS DIE A-BORNING...

WHILE, **WITHIN** THE SKY-THRUSTING MISSILE...

Y'KNOW, STRETCH, IT'S NONE'A **MY** BUSINESS--BUT I THINK YOU SHOULD'A LET **SUZIE** COME ALONG. SHE--

YOU'RE **RIGHT,** BEN.

HUH?

IT **ISN'T** ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.

HAVOC IN THE HIDDEN LAND!

Gaja

AND, ON **THAT** HAPPY NOTE, WE TAKE YOU ON AN EXCURSION INTO THE ETHER WITH:

ROY THOMAS * RICH BUCKLER & JOE SINNOTT
author/editor *artist* *embellisher*

JANICE COHEN
colorist

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letterer

AWRIGHT, REED, SO SHE'S YOUR WIFE--BUT SHE'S STILL MY FRIEND, OKAY?

YES--BUT SHE'S NEVER GONE BACK TO BEING A FULLTIME F.F. MEMBER.

AND, UNTIL SHE MAKES UP HER MIND WHETHER SHE IS OR ISN'T--

--I THINK WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO ACT WITHOUT HER, ESPECIALLY SINCE, WITH MEDUSA, WE ALREADY HAVE FOUR MEMBERS.

SO YA CHANGE THAT DIGIT ON YER SHIRT TO A "5"--IZZAT GONNA KILL YA?

IT MIGHT.

LIKE I SAID--HUH?

NOTHING, OLD FRIEND. JUST... A BAD JOKE...

...WITH MYSELF.

WHAT OTHER THOUGHTS REED RICHARDS AND COMPANY HAVE MUST GO UNRECORDED FOR NOW--AS, NOT LONG AFTERWARD, ABOVE THE SNOW-CAPPED HIMALAYAS...

THERE IT IS, PEOPLE!

THE HIDDEN LAND--THE GREAT REFUGE--CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL--

THE SECRET HOME OF THE INHUMANS!

SECRET IS RIGHT, BOSS-MAN! THE WHOLE PLACE IS A GHOST TOWN.

EITHER THAT'S A GOOD SIGN, JOHNNY, FOR ITS CONQUERORS* FEEL THEY ARE BEYOND ATTACK, OR ELSE--

OR ELSE IT'S A TRAP!

AN' TILL WE FIND OUT WHICH, I'M KEEPIN' MY BABY-BLUES ON PIETRO.

DO SO! BUT, I WARN YOU--INITIATE NO ACTION WHICH MIGHT ENDANGER MY BELOVED CRYSTAL!

SHE IS THE ONLY PERSON, BESIDES MY SISTER WANDA, WHO HAS EVER MEANT ANYTHING TO ME.

CAUSE HER PERIL--AND I WOULD BE FORCED TO SIDE WITH HER CAPTORS.

*LAST ISSUE, QUICKSILVER JOURNEYED STATESIDE TO TELL THE F.F. OF HIS ADOPTED LAND'S TAKEOVER BY FORCES FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION. --ROY THE BOY.

STRANGE! EVEN THE BOTTOMLESS FOUNTAIN IS ABANDONED.

AFTER TRITON FLED INTO ITS RECESSES, I WAS SURE XEMU'S FIFTH DIMENSION TROOPS WOULD BE GUARDING IT!

"FIFTH DIMENSION"--SHEESH!

DON'T XEMU KNOW TIMES'VE CHANGED SINCE HE TOOK ON THE TORCH?

ALL THE FIFTH DIMENSION MEANS TA ME IS A GLITZY ROCK GROUP.

THE LEAST XEMU COULD'A DONE IS CHANGE THE NAME'A THE PLACE, SO--

WHUZZAT?

FOOSH

A FIREBALL-- RIGHT IN THE OL' MUSH!

CAN'T BLAME TORCHY FER LETTIN' GO, THOUGH--

LOOK WHAT JUST CAME OUTTA THE WOODWORK!

SKOW

UNNNHH!

WHOEVER HE IS, BEN, HE SEEMS TO BE MADE OUT OF SOME SORT OF ASBESTOS-LIKE MATERIAL!

HE'S IMMUNE TO JOHNNY'S FLAME!

STOP ANALYZIN' 'IM AWREADY, STRETCHO-- BEFORE HE BEATS YER BROTHER-IN-LAW TO A PULP!

AN' I DON'T MEAN MAGAZINE!

HEY! I JUST REALIZED-- I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE, GUY!

YER ONE'A THE INHUMANS! SO HOW COME YOU'VE TURNED AGAINST US?

THE SILENT TREATMENT, HUH?

WELL, MY PHANTOM PUNCH OUGHTTA LOOSEN YER GUMS, AN'--

YEEEOWW!

I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT!

EVERY TIME I GET SET TO UNCORK A GOOD ONE--SOMEBODY ZAPS ME FROM BEHIND!

FZORP!

THEN **TURN**, BRUTISH ONE...

...AND I SHALL FIRE AGAIN AT YOUR **ANTERIOR**, REPULSIVE THOUGH IT BE.

WHA--?

YOU AIN'T NO **BURT REYNOLDS** YERSELF, BLUEBEARD!

I'M BETTIN' YER THAT **XEMU** CRUMB--AN' I'M **ALSO** BETTIN' THAT I'M--GONNA KNOCK--YER BLOCK-- CLEAN--

OFF

BEN!

...IT WAS **MOST KIND** OF YOU OTHERS TO **SURRENDER** TO ME, EVEN THOUGH I REALIZE IT IS ONLY BECAUSE I HAVE THE **INHUMANS** IN THRALL.

I **WOULD**, OF COURSE, HAVE CARRIED OUT MY THREAT TO **EXTERMINATE** ONE OF THEM FOR EACH SECOND THAT YOU **RESISTED**.

OUR INNING WILL COME **LATER**, XEMU.

YOU WILL **HAVE**, NO SO-CALLED "**INNING**"-- NOT NOW, NOT **EVER**!

CRYSTAL! IS MY **BRIDE** STILL SAFE, XEMU? IF YOU'VE **HARMED** HER--!

WHAT'LL YOU **DO**, SPEED-FREAK? **CRY** ALL OVER 'IM?

FACE IT-- YOU CAME TA FUN CITY TO LURE **MEDUSA** BACK HERE, AN' NOW YOU GOT US **ALL** IN DUTCH.

I-- COULDN'T **HELP** IT! XEMU WOULD HAVE **KILLED CRYSTAL** IF I HADN'T.

ONLY **MEDUSA** COULD POSSIBLY PERSUADE **BLACK BOLT** TO GO ALONG WITH XEMU'S **MAD SCHEME** TO--

SILENCE! THERE WILL BE A TIME **LATER** FOR EXPLANATIONS.

NOW, I LEAVE YOU--TO WRITHE IN ANTICIPATION OF MY **NEXT** MOVE.

PERHAPS YOU ARE **RIGHT**, BEN GRIMM. PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE DONE AS **BLACK BOLT** WISHED--

--AND SEEN ALL OF US **PERISH**--RATHER THAN **BETRAY AN ENTIRE PLANET!**

NO, QUICK-SILVER--!

NOW WHO'S GETTIN' INTA THE ACT?

HOLY COW! IT'S VAL! VALERIA!!

THE CHICK YOU TOLD US ALL ABOUT, BACK WHEN YOU FIRST CREAMED XEMU?*

I AM PLEASED, JOHNNY STORM, THAT YOU REMEMBER ME... AND MY FATHER, PHINEAS.

HOW COULD I EVER FORGET?

*AS SEEN IN STRANGE TALES #103, OR MORE RECENTLY IN HUMAN TORCH #3.--ROY.

BUT YOU DID FORGET, JOHNNY! YOU NEVER RETURNED, AND EVENTUALLY XEMU GREW STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE OVER OUR DIMENSION AGAIN.

HE BROUGHT US HERE TO MOCK US WITH HIS COMING TRIUMPHS.

WE HAD HOPED YOU FOUR COULD DEFEAT HIM-- BUT NOW, YOU TOO ARE IN CHAINS.

CHAINS? OH YEAH...

FIK

FIK

FIK

FIK

FIK

...I FERGOT ALL ABOUT THEM LITTLE BOOGERS!

NOW, YOU WUZ SAYIN', GRAMPS?

I'LL TELL YOU MORE--BUT WHY DON'T YOU FREE YOUR FRIENDS FIRST?

SURE, SURE...

I JUST FIGGERED OL' STRETCH WOULD'A SLIPPED OUTTA THESE THREADS BY HIS LONESOME.

NOW, PHINEAS...

SNAP!

...IF EVERYONE IS LISTENING!?

I'M ALL EARS, REED.

I FEAR IT WAS I WHO DEVELOPED THE FEARSOME WEAPON WITH WHICH XEMU HOPES TO CONQUER EARTH --AND THEN THE UNIVERSE.

I'LL DESCRIBE ITS OPERATION TO YOU, SO THAT YOU WILL KNOW HOW TO COMBAT IT IF WE ESCAPE.

WHEN WE ESCAPE!

GO ON...

IT AMPLIFIES EITHER VOCAL OR MENTAL ENERGY DEPENDENT UPON--

LOOK, WE WON'T BORE YOU IMPATIENT ONES WITH ALL THE TECHNICAL DETAILS--AND BESIDES, WE ALMOST FLUNKED WOODWORK 101.

THEN, MOMENTS LATER...

ALL RIGHT, GANG-- WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.

NOW LET'S EACH TAKE A WALL-- AND FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE!

HECK, I COULD'A THOUGHT OF THAT FIVE MINUTES AGO.

NOW, JUST IN CASE YOU NOTICED THAT A CERTAIN **RED-TRESSED SUPER-LASS** WAS MISSING FROM THE LAST FEW PANELS...

SO, WE MEET AT **LAST**, MADAME MEDUSA!

IT **PLEASES** ME TO LAY EYES UPON THE PERSON **MOST BELOVED** OF **BLACK BOLT.**

WHERE **IS** HE? IF YOU'VE **HARMED** HIM--!

HOLD HER, YOU FOOLS!

SHE **CANNOT** USE HER LONG HAIR AS A **WEAPON** NOW, GREAT XEMU.

OUR **LETHARGIZERS** HAVE SEEN TO **THAT.**

AH YES, I HAD NEARLY **FORGOTTEN.** STILL, YOU **CAN** BE OF GREAT USE TO YOUR PEOPLE, MEDUSA...

...BY PERSUADING **BLACK BOLT,** MONARCH OF THE INHUMANS, TO **COOPERATE** WITH ME IN MY PLANNED **CONQUEST** OF THIS PLANET EARTH...

...BY SPEAKING INTO THE **THUNDER HORN!**

ALLOW ME TO ***EXPLAIN***, MILADY, JUST AS I HAVE PREVIOUSLY DONE TO ***BLACK BOLT*** HIMSELF.

BUT FIRST-- WE'VE ***NO NEED*** OF THIS RESTRAINING ***GAG***, HAVE WE, MY GOOD FRIEND?

AFTER ALL, THE WHOLE ***OBJECT*** OF THESE TACTICS IS TO MAKE YOU ***SPEAK***, EH?

SOMETHING YOU ARE EXTREMELY ***RELUCTANT*** TO DO.

AND WITH GOOD ***REASON***, XEMU!

DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT BLACK BOLT'S ***VOICE*** COULD SHATTER THE ENTIRE ***REFUGE*** AROUND YOU?

I AM ***TOUCHED***, MADAME, THAT YOU FEAR FOR MY ***SAFETY***.

BUT, IT IS NOT ***XEMU*** WHO IS IN DIREST ***DANGER!***

PIETRO DOUBTLESS TOLD YOU OF THE ***THUNDER HORN***, WHICH ***AMPLIFIES*** AND ***DIRECTS*** SOUND...

...OR, WITH A FEW DELICATE ADJUST-MENTS, ***EXTRA-NORMAL MENTAL ENERGY...***

...AND WHICH THUS COULD TURN, YOUR BELOVED'S ***VOICE*** INTO THE ***ULTIMATE WEAPON!***

WATCH, FOR INSTANCE, AS I FIRE THIS PORTABLE ***SONIC BLASTER*** INTO THE HORN'S ***MOUTHPIECE***--

MMM

THERE IS ***NO SOUND*** HERE, TO SHATTER BUILDINGS--

AH, BUT MILES AWAY, ***BEYOND*** THE SURROUNDING PEAKS, THIS ***SASER BEAM**** IS CAUSING ***UNTOLD DESTRUCTION!***

AND HOW MUCH ***MORE*** DEVASTATING IT WOULD BE IF POWERED BY THE CRY OF ***BLACK BOLT!***

BUT HE WOULD ***DENY*** ME THAT CRY--SO I DEVISED A ***TWO-PRONGED PLAN*** TO ***FORCE*** HIS COOPERATION.

FIRST, DEAR MEDUSA, I BROUGHT ***YOU*** HERE-- FOR YOU, OF ***ALL*** PEOPLE, BLACK BOLT DOES NOT WISH TO SEE ***HARMED!***

SECONDLY, AND OF ***EQUAL*** IMPORTANCE-- THIS LATEST BLAST WAS NO ***RANDOM, UNDIRECTED SHOT***--

--BUT WAS AIMED AT A ***VERY SPECIFIC TARGET*** BEYOND THOSE MOUNTAINS--

*SOUND AMPLIFICATION BY STIMULATED EMISSION OF RADIATION.--ROY.

--A CHINESE AIR INSTALLATION!

AND, THIS SEISMO-GRAPH SHOWS--IT WAS A DIRECT HIT!

YES, I HAVE STUDIED EARTH'S PETTY SQUABBLES--AND I KNOW THE CHINESE WILL SWIFTLY TRACE THE SOURCE BACK HERE.

IF YOU SMASH THE RETALIATORY FORCE THEY WILL SEND, AMERICAN OR RUSSIAN TREACHERY WILL BE IMAGINED IN THE HIGHEST CHINESE CIRCLES...

...AND AN ATOMIC WAR WILL RESULT!

IF YOU DO NOT ACT, THE GREAT REFUGE AND ALL WITHIN IT WILL BE DESTROYED, WHILE I WATCH SAFELY FROM THE FIFTH DIMENSION!

YOU'RE MAD!

DEBAT-ABLE--BUT THE CHOICE IS BLACK BOLT'S!

IF HE DOES NOT HELP ME REDUCE THIS WORLD TO A WAR-RAVAGED RUBBLE I CAN EASILY CONQUER, ALL YOU INHUMAN SCUM WILL DIE!!

NOT THAT THE INHUMANS ARE THE ONLY ENDANGERED SPECIES AROUND HERE...

IT IS HOPELESS, REED RICHARDS. THERE IS NO WAY OUT.

NO CREVICE I CAN CREEP THRU, ANYWAY.

THIS PLACE IS AIR-TIGHT!

I THINK I CAN GET US OUT, REED--THOUGH IT'LL TAKE A WHILE.

IF I CONCENTRATE ALL MY FIREPOWER INTO ONE HAND, I CAN BURN THRU--

NO! NOT YET, JOHNNY! YOU'D PROBABLY EXHAUST ALL THE OXYGEN IN HERE BEFORE YOU'D FREE US.

SO WHAT ALTERN-ATIVES DO WE HAVE?

WE'VE GOT TO LET THE THING TRY FIRST--!

THANKS, PAL. I'LL GIVE IT THE OL' COLLEGE TRY--

BUT FER ONCE IN MY LIFE, I AIN'T GONNA COME ON LIKE MR. SELF-CONFIDENCE!

IF XEMU PUT US IN HERE, HE MUST'A FIGGERED THAT--YEP!

SPLAM

THAT PUNCH WOULD'A LAID GALACTUS UP TILL APRIL FOOL'S DAY--

--BUT I BARELY **CRACKED** THE WALL--NOT EVEN ENUFF TA LET A WHIFF OF **AIR** IN!

PERHAPS **NOT,** BEN-- BUT YOU **DID** CAUSE SOMETHING YOU DIDN'T **MEAN** TO.

HUH? **WHUZZAT?**

LOOK, BIG FELLA-- BENEATH YOUR VERY **FEET!**

SONUVAGUN! THE CRACKS'RE SPEADIN' TO THE **FLOOR**--AN' THERE'S SOMETHIN' **OOZIN' UP** THRU IT--!

IT'S-- **WATER!**

STAND BACK, PEOPLE! SHE'S GONNA--

..BLOW!

KPOOSH

WE MUST BE DIRECTLY OVER AN **UNDERGROUND RIVER** OF SOME SORT. I DON'T SEE **WHY** IT WOULD--

I **SEE** HIM, SON--AND I'M **PREPARED!**

REED! THERE'S **SOMEBODY--**

ARE YOU, REED RICHARDS?

THEN-- BY ALL MEANS-- LET US **ACT!**

TRITON!

ARE YOU *STARTLED*, MY FRIENDS?

IF YOU KNEW I HAD *ESCAPED* XEMU--

--COULD YOU DOUBT I WOULD SOON *RETURN*?

YEAH--YOU WUZ *ALWAYS* LIKE THAT, GREENIE.

I FELT THE *TREMORS* CAUSED BY BEN'S BLOW--

--AND HELPED THINGS *ALONG* A BIT WITH CHANNELED *WATER PRESSURE* FROM BELOW.

NOW, IF YOU'LL ALL TAKE A SINGLE *DEEP BREATH* AND FOLLOW *ME*--

--YOU'LL SOON FIND YOURSELVES *FREE!*

YET-- WE'RE ONLY BACK TO WHERE WE WERE *BEFORE*--WITH *XEMU* STILL IN CONTROL OF THIS *HIDDEN LAND.*

HE SHALL NOT BE SO FOR *LONG.* I *SWEAR* IT!

TOO LONG HAS TRITON SKULKED THRU DARK, SUNKEN *CAVERNS*--!

FLAME ON!

I'M NOT TOO KEEN ON 'EM *MYSELF*, SCALE-FACE.

AND, SOON AS I BURN THE LAST DROP OF *MOISTURE* OFF MY WATER-LOGGED *BOD*--

--IT'S *WATCH OUT, 5-D WEIRDOES!*

WHAT'S WITH *YOU*, STRINGBEAN? HOW COME YER NOT SPOUTIN' *BATTLE CRIES* LIKE THE REST OF US?

WE'RE *NOT* GOING TO ATTACK, BEN.

DON'TCHA KNOW ANY WITH *BIG WORDS* IN 'EM?

IF WE *DO*--XEMU WILL *SLAY HIS HOSTAGES!*

YEAH--I GUESS YER *RIGHT*-- AS PER *USUAL.*

REIN IT IN, FLAME-BRAIN!

BUT WE GOTTA DO *SOMETHIN',* LEADER-MAN.

IF WE *DON'T*, XEMU'S GONNA GET OFF A GOOD BLAST ON PHINEAS' *THUNDER HORN* SOMEHOW--

--AN' THAT'S *ONE* WEAPON THERE AIN'T *NO DEFENSE* AGAINST!

TELL IT TO THE **RED CHINESE**, BEN--FOR, UNKNOWN TO YOU, THEY HAVE JUST SUFFERED HEAVY LOSS FROM A MYSTERIOUS **SEISMIC SHOCK-WAVE**--

VRUMM

AND NOW, THE **SURVIVORS** ARE TAKING TO THE SKIES LIKE **ANGRY HORNETS**--

--BUT THEY ARE HORNETS ARMED WITH **NUCLEAR WARHEADS!**

AND, THOSE SKIES ARE ABOUT TO GET **CROWDED**...

GREAT XEMU--**LOOK!**

FROOSH!

THE OUTSIDERS' **ROCKET**--TAKING **OFF!**

AIM THE **THUNDER HORN** AT THEM, MASTER!

THE MISSILE HAS SUCH **SPEED**--IN MOMENTS, IT WILL BE **OUT OF RANGE**--!

WHAT **MATTER**? THEIR **FLEEING** SIMPLY UNDER-SCORES MY TOTAL **VICTORY.**

WHAT HAS **XEMU** TO FEAR FROM **COWARDS** SUCH AS THEY?

WOULD THAT **YOU** HAD THEIR RARE GOOD **SENSE**, BLACK BOLT!

BUT **NO**--YOU WOULD RATHER SEE YOUR SUBJECTS **SLAIN**--YOUR GREAT REFUGE **DECIMATED** BY THE COMING ATTACK OF YOUR **NEIGHBORS**--

--THAN BLOT YOUR PRECIOUS **HONOR!**

BRING IN THE ROYAL FAMILY!

THEN--YOU HAVE **DECIDED** YOUR PEOPLE'S FATE!

YOU HAVE **DONE WELL**, MY KINGLY COUSIN!

BETTER A **QUICK DEATH**, THAN THE **DISGRACE** OF BOWING TO A DICTATOR'S WILL!

GORGON SPEAKS FOR US **ALL!**

ENOUGH TALK! DO NOT BOTHER WITH **THOSE** FOOLS!

TIME GROWS **SHORT**--AND THE **PLANES** OF THE CHINESE MAY NOT BE **LONG** IN COMING.

IT IS **MEDUSA** WHO MUST BE DESTROYED FIRST! **MEDUSA, I SAY!**

YES, GREAT XEMU. BUT--WHAT IS THAT **SOUND**--

--LIKE THE RUSHING OF A **GREAT WIND**?

GREAT WIND? I HEAR **NOTH**--

YES! NOW I HEAR IT, AND --**NO! NO**, IT CANNOT **BE**--!

THE JET-PROPELLED *AIRCRAFT* OF THE SO-CALLED *CHINESE!* THEY HAVE ARRIVED MUCH MORE *SWIFTLY* THAN I HAD IMAGINED!

THERE IS NO TIME TO AIM THE *THUNDER HORN* AT THEM!

WHAT SHALL WE *DO*, MASTER?

DO WHAT YOU *WILL*, FOOL--OR ELSE *DIE*, IF YOU MUST!

GREAT XEMU--!

AYE-- *GREAT* XEMU! *TOO* GREAT TO SHARE THE FATE OF *LACKEYS!*

WALK THE DUSKY HALLS TO DEATH BY *YOURSELF--*

I SHALL RETURN WHEN THE ATTACKING PLANES HAVE *DEPARTED--*

--IF THERE BE AUGHT TO *RETURN* TO!

ANOTHER "MAN-ON-HORSEBACK" HAS DEVELOPED *SADDLE-SORES*, IT SEEMS.

DUMFOUNDED BY THEIR MASTER'S DESERTION, THE 5th-DIMENSION GUARDS *RELAX* FOR AN INSTANT THEIR TAUT HOLD ON GORGON'S ENERGY-SAPPING *BONDS...*

--ONLY TO RECALL AT ONCE WHY THEY HELD HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE, AS HIS THUNDERING HOOF SENDS THEM REELING!

THERE ARE *OTHER* TREMORS THAN THOSE OF THE *THUNDER HORN*, BUFFOONS!

THRUM

LOOK, LITTLE COUSIN! THEY TOPPLE LIKE *TENPINS.*

AYE--BUT, IS THERE TIME TO PROTECT OURSELVES FROM THE *HUMANS' ATTACK* BEFORE--?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE *CHINESE*, KARNAK--

JUST TAKE CARE OF *XEMU'S MEN*-- AND EVERYTHING WILL BE *ALL RIGHT!*

I'VE NO TIME TO *EXPLAIN*-- BUT THE GREAT REFUGE *WILL NOT BE BOMBED!!*

SUE RICHARDS!

THEN, SHE WAS *HERE* ALL THE WHILE-- HERE, BUT *INVISIBLE!*

GET HER! SLAY HER!

THE INVISIBLE GIRL MUST DIE!

SHE WILL *NOT* DIE-- NOT WHILE THE *INHUMANS* LIVE!

AND-- WE'RE *FREE* AGAIN!

YES-- FREE TO RECLAIM OUR *HIDDEN LAND*-- OUR NOBLE *HERITAGE!*

WHILE YOU RAMBLE ON IN ABSTRACT PHILOSOPHICAL *TERMS*, KARNAK...

...WOULD YOU PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO FREE OUR *COUSIN AND MONARCH*, AS WELL?

I'LL HOLD BACK XEMU'S *MINIONS*-- THOUGH I DOUBT IF THERE'S MUCH REAL *FIGHT* LEFT IN THEM.

AND *I'LL* TAKE CARE OF MY LOVELY, WONDERFUL *WIFE!*

WHAT? THAT SOUNDS LIKE--

--REED RICHARDS!?

BUT-- THE *ROCKET* THAT JUST *LIFTED OFF*--?

--CONTAINED *JOHNNY* AND THE OTHERS!

BEN, TRITON, AND I STAYED *BEHIND* TO--

REED! STOP! PUT ME *DOWN!* MUST *CONCENTRATE*--!

HONEY-- *WHAT*--?

PLEASE, REED-- NO TIME FOR *TALKING!*

IF I *LET UP*-- EVEN FOR A *MOMENT*-- THOSE PLANES WILL *ATTACK!*

GOOD LORD! NOW I THINK I *UNDERSTAND!* I--

THEN EXPLAIN IT TA *ME*, BIG-BRAIN. THEM PLANES IS *SCOOTIN' OFF* WITHOUT DROPPIN' SO MUCH AS AN *EGG-ROLL*--

--AN' *WE* WAS SURE THEY'D AT LEAST *STRAFE* THE PLACE, WHEN THEY *SAW* IT!

NO, *WAIT*--ON *SECOND* THOUGHT, STRETCH--SAVE THE FOOTNOTES FOR *LATER!*

RIGHT NOW, IT LOOKS LIKE *XEMU'S LEFTOVERS* IS GETTIN' SET TA GANG UP ON OL' *THUNDERFOOT*--

AN' *THAT* MEANS--

--IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

I REGRET I'VE NO *INHUMAN* EQUIVALENT OF YOUR COLORFUL BATTLE-CRY, BEN GRIMM--

--AND SO, AS *YOUR* PEOPLE SAY-- I SHALL LET MY *FEET* DO THE TALKING!

THWAM!

THAT'S *"WALKIN',"* GORGY-- BUT I GETCHER *MEANIN'!*

PUNT!

OUR PLANS IN *RUINS*--OUR LEADER *FLED!* THERE IS *NOTHING* I CAN DO NOW--

-- BUT *SAVE MYSELFFFFFFF*

...EVEN *THAT* IS FAR BEYOND YOUR CAPACITY.

AWK

AS A MATTER OF UNEQUIVOCAL *FACT,* MY DEAR SIR...

'WAY TA *GO,* KARATE KID! NOW, CALL OFF YER *DOGS,* MISTER--

--WHILE YOU STILL GOT A MOUTHFULLA *TEETH* TA DO IT WITH!

H-HEED THE MAN-MONSTER'S *WORDS,* MEN OF THE FIFTH DIMENSION!

LAY DOWN YOUR *ARMS*-- AND THROW YOURSELVES ON THE *MERCY* OF THE INHUMANS AND THEIR ALLIES!

AND THEN, WITHOUT FURTHER ADO AND WITH MINIMAL GROUP DISCUSSION...

I HOPE *PAPA PHINEAS* AIN'T TOO *PERSONALLY ATTACHED* TO THIS *THUNDER-HORN* GIZMO OF HIS.

'CAUSE, OL' *BROTHER BENJY* AIN'T GONNA REST EASY WITHOUT WEARIN' *EAR-PLUGS--*

XEMU'S MEN PROVE ONLY TOO HAPPY TO COMPLY...

GA-RAAT

--TILL I'VE DONE ME SOME PLAIN AN' FANCY SHREDDIN'!

HAVEN'T WE **ALL** FELT A LITTLE BIT LIKE THAT, SOMETIMES ?

MEANWHILE, JUST IN CASE ANYBODY STILL CARES WHAT HAPPENED TO **XEMU**...

SAFE-- BACK IN MY OWN **FIFTH DIMENSION!**

AND, ONCE THE **AIR-CRAFT** HAVE DONE THEIR WORST, **HUMAN** AND **INHUMAN** ALIKE SHALL LEARN--

WE DON'T **DOUBT** IT, PAL...

--THAT XEMU HAS MORE THAN **ONE** PLAN OF CONQUEST UP HIS SLEEVE!

BUT YOU'RE GONNA FIND THOSE **SLEEVES** WON'T DO YOU ANY **GOOD**, WHEN THEY'VE GOT **HANDCUFFS** ON 'EM!

THE HUMAN TORCH! AND-- **YOU OTHERS!**

BUT **HOW**, IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S **UNHOLY**--?

WILL **YOU** TELL HIM, TORCH, OR SHALL **I**?

LET'S KEEP HIM IN *SUSPENSE* A WHILE!

I'LL PUT HIM OUT OF *COMMISSION.*

AFTER ALL, I'M *USED* TO IT!

WELL DONE, JOHNNY STORM...

WITH *XEMU* IN THRALL, NO MORE SHALL THE *FIFTH DIMENSION* MENACE THE PEACE OF *TWO WORLDS.*

AND THEY WILL *BOTH* BE GLAD TO *HEAR* IT.

NOW, TORCH, SHALL WE--?

NOT-- *QUITE YET,* PIETRO.

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO *DO* FIRST...

...SOMETHING I *SHOULD'VE* DONE SEVERAL *YEARS* AGO...

BUT, BETTER *LATE* THAN *NEVER...*

WELL! IT APPEARS THAT EVEN THE *HUMAN* TORCH CAN'T CARRY HIS OWN TORCH *FOREVER.*

BRAVO FOR *YOU,* JOHNNY STORM! *YOU'LL* BE HAPPIER...

...AND SO WILL *I*-- WHEN YOU STOP THINKING OF *CRYSTAL* AS *YOUR* GIRL--

-- WHEN SHE'S NOW *MY WIFE!*

LOOK, VAL-- I KNOW I'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO *SAY* THIS, BUT...

THEN *DON'T,* JOHNNY. JUST... WAIT A WHILE...

AND *THEN*, PERHAPS... IF YOU'D *LIKE* TO SEE ME AGAIN, AND *TALK* ABOUT IT...

...YOU NOW *KNOW* HOW TO REACH THE FIFTH DIMENSION AT *WILL*.

AND *THIS* TIME, PERHAPS IT WON'T TAKE YOU *SEVERAL YEARS* TO MAKE UP YOUR *MIND*...?

NOT *LIKELY*, LITTLE GIRL BLUE!

WELL, *QUICKSILVER* AND I BETTER *MOVE* IT-- JUST IN CASE WE'RE NEEDED BACK IN THE *REFUGE*.

I'VE-- BEEN TRYING NOT TO *THINK* ABOUT THAT, JOHNNY.

LET'S GO!!

*NEXT INSTANT, THE F.F.'S ROCKET **VANISHES** IN VALERIA'S WORLD-- TO REAPPEAR IN AN **EQUALLY** HAPPY HIDDEN LAND...*

WELL, WADDAYA *KNOW!* THE TWO *WHIZ KIDS* 'RE BACK!

AND, FOR THE *FIRST* TIME, I DON'T FEEL A *LUMP* IN MY THROAT BECAUSE CRYSTAL'S RUNNING TO *PIETRO*-- NOT TO *ME*!

NOW, RUBBER-MAN, YOU WANNA TELL US WHY THEM *CHINESE JETS* RAN OFF WITHOUT DROPPIN' SO MUCH AS A *PROPAGANDA LEAFLET*?

I'D PREFER TO LET *SUE* EXPLAIN IT HERSELF, BEN...

YOU ALREADY *KNOW* THE ANSWER, REED.

FOR REASONS WE'LL DISCUSS LATER IN *PRIVATE*, YOU REFUSED TO LET ME *ACCOMPANY* YOU HERE-- SO NATURALLY I *STOWED AWAY*.

NOT A *DIFFICULT* TASK, FOR AN *INVISIBLE GIRL*.

*"WHEN YOU WERE **CAPTURED**, I CONFERRED UNSEEN WITH **BLACK BOLT**-- WHILE XEMU **RAVED**--*

*"I ENCOURAGED HIM TO **HOLD OUT**, NO MATTER **WHAT**!*

*"THEN, AFTER WATCHING **XEMU** OPERATE THE THUNDER-HORN, I MANAGED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO **HOOK UP MENTALLY** WITH THE DEVICE--*

*"--SO THAT, AT THE CRUCIAL MOMENT, IT **AMPLIFIED** MY POWERS **MANY TIMES**--*

"--MAKING THE ENTIRE REFUGE **INVISIBLE** TO THE NAKED EYE--

"--SO THAT THE **JETS** OVERHEAD SAW NOTHING BUT THE **HIMALAYAS** THEMSELVES!

"**END** OF EXPLANATION."

THAT WAS **BRILLIANT**, HONEY! ORDINARILY, YOU CAN'T MAKE BOTH **YOURSELF** AND **SOMETHING ELSE** INVISIBLE AT THE **SAME TIME**--

BUT, LUCKILY, THE THUNDERHORN WOULD AMPLIFY **OTHER** THINGS THAN **SOUND**--ONCE YOU WERE TUNED IN WITH IT **MENTALLY!**

SUZIE-BABY, IT LOOKS LIKE WE BEEN **UNDERESTIMATIN'** YOU FER THE PAST ZILLION YEARS OR SO--BUT TAKE IT FROM **BENJY**, THAT'S ALL **THRU!** WE--

YOU **KNOW** IT, PIZZA-PUSS!

HUH? WHATTINAWORLD--?

NOTHING **DRASTIC**, OLD BUDDY--

I JUST FOUND ONE OF MY **OLD BLUE OUTFITS** ON BOARD--

AND SOMEHOW, WITH **SUE** BACK IN UNIFORM, I KIND'A THOUGHT--

WELL, NOW WE LOOK MORE LIKE A **TEAM** AGAIN, THAT'S ALL!

LISSEN, SQUIRT--YOU WANNA MAKE SOME **CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS**, YOU COULD START WEARIN' A **MASK.**

BUT--**YEAH**, IT **DOES** KIND'A LOOK--**BETTER**, SOMEHOW.

WELL THEN, IT LOOKS AS IF SUE'S MADE UP HER **MIND**--AND SHE'S BACK AS A **FULLTIME** F.F. MEMBER AGAIN!

THEN, **I** MOVE WE FINALLY GET AROUND TO CHANGING THE **NUMBERS** ON OUR CHESTS--!

SECONDED! AS BEN SAID, THE **FANTASTIC FIVE** SOUNDS EVERY BIT AS GOOD AS--

NO, REED...

EH?

WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I WISH TO **RESIGN** FROM THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

I'VE BEEN **LONG ENOUGH** FROM THE SIDE OF MY **PEOPLE**...

AND, WHEN **NEXT** I VENTURE FROM THE HIDDEN LAND--I WISH IT TO BE AT **BLACK BOLT'S** SIDE.

PERMISSION **GRANTED**, MEDUSA. YOU **JOINED** US HERE, MONTHS AGO--I GUESS IT'S ONLY FITTING WE SHOULD **PART** HERE, AS WELL.

WELL, SUE--IF YOU CAN **FORGIVE** ME FOR BEING A BIT **OVERPROTECTIVE** AGAIN--

THERE ARE **WORSE** THINGS, DARLING.

--THEN I THINK WE'D BEST START LOOKING FOR A PART TIME **BABY-SITTER** FOR LITTLE **FRANKLIN**...

...**AND** START REMEMBERING WHAT IT WAS WE **LIKED** ABOUT THE SO-CALLED **GOOD OLD DAYS!**

NEXT: THINGS TO COME!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

NO MAN-- NO THING.. CAN STAND AGAINST THE THUNDERBOLTS OF ARKON, THE ANNIHILATOR!

JUST COME A LITTLE BIT CLOSER, LAUGHIN' BOY--

--AN' I'M GONNA MAKE HANK AARON LOOK LIKE A LITTLE LEAGUER!!

A brilliant scientist—— his best friend—— the woman he loves—— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! They are the FANTASTIC FOUR—— and the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR! TM

IN ONE WORLD-- AND OUT THE OTHER!

FEBRUARY 14, 1974:

AND WHAT'S ST. VALENTINE'S DAY WITHOUT A LITTLE MASSACRE?

THIS TIME, THOUGH, THE PROPOSED TARGET IS NOT BUGSY MORAN, --BUT THE EVER-LOVIN', BLUE-EYED THING!

A FULL-FLEDGED FORAY INTO FANTASY BY:

ROY THOMAS
WRITER/EDITOR

JOHN BUSCEMA
AND
CHIC STONE
ARTISTS

JANICE COHEN
COLORIST
RAY HOLLOWAY
LETTERER

KA-THOOM!

AND THE WEIRD STUFF HASN'T EVEN STARTED YET--!

--THOUGH IT LOOKS AS IF EVERYBODY'S KEEPING BUSY!

HEAR ME-- YOU WHOM MEN HAVE CALLED THE THING--

FA-RAAK

YOU SOUGHT TO ESCAPE, TO SEEK SHELTER FROM THE JUSTICE WHICH IS MINE TO DISPERSE.

BUT THERE IS NOWHERE YOU CAN HIDE--NO PLACE YOU CAN FLEE--

--TO ESCAPE THE WRATH OF ARKON THE MAGNIFICENT!*

LAST SEEN IN AVENGERS #84. --REMINISCING ROY.

THE EMBATTLED MAN-MONSTER'S RESPONSE IS DECIDEDLY NON-VERBAL--

KWAPP!

--BUT NONETHELESS CLEAR, FOR ALL THAT.

BRUTE FORCE!

I MIGHT HAVE SUSPECTED YOU WOULD RESORT TO THAT.

DONE! IF IT IS POWER ALONE WHICH WILL INDUCE YOU TO SURRENDER--

--WHY, THEN, POWER SHALL BE SERVED!

TU-ROOM!

SEE NOW THE FACE OF THE THING--AS YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE!

SEE IT NOW DISTORTED WITH FEAR--

--WITH BLIND, UNREASONING PANIC!

THEN, WITH THAT **IMAGE** STILL BURNED INTO YOUR BRAIN, VIEW THIS SCENE ONLY A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY--

--AS A GIRL NAMED **ALICIA MASTERS** FEELS THE SEARING **SHOCK WAVES** OF THAT PANIC:

GANGWAY! LEMME OUTTA HERE!

STOP THEM! CAN'T ANYONE **STOP** THEM??

THEY'LL WRECK THE **WHOLE CITY** IF THEY'RE NOT STOPPED!

I SAID **OUTTA MY WAY,** LADY!

WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE **GOIN'??**

OHHH--!

WHAT **IS** IT? I HEAR THE **SOUNDS,** BUT I DON'T--

IT'S THE **THING**-- THAT BIG GUY FROM THE **FANTASTIC FOUR**--

HE'S GETTING **TROMPED** FROM HERE TO KINGDOM COME--BY SOME **OTHER** JOKER ON A **FLYING LIZARD!**

QUICKLY-- HOW FAR **AWAY** ARE THEY? I MUST **KNOW!**

HEY-- WHASSA-**MATTER** WITH YOU? **ARE YOU--?**

OH. I--I **SEE** NOW. YOU **ARE!**

THEY'RE JUST A **BLOCK AHEAD** OF YOU. BUT IF I WAS **YOU,** I--

THANK YOU.

DON'T **MENTION** IT, LADY.

AND I **MEAN**-- DON'T **MENTION** IT!

YET, MEN **WILL** MENTION IT. WHEN THIS DAY IS DONE.

THEY WILL TALK **LONG,** IF TO NO GREAT **EFFECT,** BUT THE **BATTLE** WHICH RAGED TODAY IN THE HEART OF TEEMING MANHATTAN.

THEY WILL SPEAK OF A MAN WHO HURLED **THUNDER-BOLTS,** AS IF HE WERE **ZEUS** COME SUDDENLY TO LIFE--

THEY WILL WHISPER IN AWE OF THE ONE WHO **OPPOSED** HIM, PITTING HIS OWN **SHEER STRENGTH** AGAINST THE COMBINED POWERS OF THE **OTHER**--

RIP RIPP

--YET SEEMINGLY TO **NO AVAIL!**

SHOOSH

AND IF YOU HAPPEN TO TUNE IN THE VARIOUS **NETWORK NEWSCASTS** ON THIS DAY OF DAYS--

--YOU CAN HEAR THREE DIFFERENT **COMMENTATORS** GIVE THREE WIDELY VARYING **INTERPRETATIONS** OF WHAT HAPPENED **NEXT--!**

BEN!

IS THAT YOU, BEN?

PLEASE **ANSWER** ME! I--I WANT TO--

HAH! IF YOU SPEAK TO THAT **MISSHAPEN MONSTROSITY** WHO SHAMBLES BEFORE YOU, WOMAN--

--YOU HAVE COME **TOO LATE!**

FOR HE HAS AT LAST BEEN FORCED TO GRASP HOLD OF **METAL** IN HIS DEFENSE AGAINST **AKRON**--

AND HIS **FIRST** MISTAKE SHALL BE HIS **FINAL** ONE!

ZZZATT!

ARRRRRR...

BEN--OH, *BEN*--WHERE *ARE* YOU? WHAT HAS HE *DONE* TO YOU?

SAY SOMETHING BEN--SO I CAN--

NO! GET *BACK*-- *WHOEVER* YOU ARE--

GET *AWAY* FROM HERE--AS QUICKLY AS YOU *CAN!*

YOU-- CAN'T FIGHT *IT!*

NO ONE CAN!

THEN, IT *IS* YOU--THE SOUND OF YOUR *VOICE*--

BUT, THE WORDS-- THEY'RE *NOT* LIKE YOU--! THEY'RE--

BEN! I HEAR THE *BEAT OF WINGS* OVERHEAD! *HE'S COMING*-- THE ONE YOU WERE *FIGHTING!*

WE'VE GOT TO GET *OUT* OF--

NO!

I'VE GOT TO--*FIGHT BACK!* GOT TO *STOP* HIM!

IT'S THE *LEAST* I CAN--

COME *BACK*, BEN! YOU *CAN'T*--

SAVE YOUR PIOUS ADMONITIONS, GIRL-- FOR ANOTHER MORE *WORTHY* OF THEM.

BE *GLAD*, MERELY, THAT ARKON'S *D-BOLT* IS MEANT ONLY FOR *HIMSELF*-- AND FOR THE DEFEATED *THING*--

FZAK!

=UHHHNNNHH--!=

--AND *NOT* FOR THE LIKES OF *YOU!*

THEN, IN A FLASH WHICH MOMENTARILY ***BLINDS*** *THOSE SKULKING BY-STANDERS WHO CAN* ***SEE***--

--BOTH ***VICTOR*** AND ***VANQUISHED*** SUDDENLY ***VANISH!***

BEN? BEN!?

THEY'RE--GONE, MISS. BOTH OF THEM!

THE LONG-HAIRED ONE THREW DOWN SOME KIND OF ARROW, SHAPED LIKE A LIGHTNING BOLT--

--AND THEY JUST DISAPPEARED!

OH--!

THEN, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO!

COULD YOU-- IS THERE A TAXI CLOSE BY, PLEASE?

I HAVE TO--GET SOME-WHERE.

OH, ER-- SURE, MISS.

I'LL GET ONE. JUST DON'T MOVE, OKAY?

LOTS OF CONCRETE CHUNKS LYING AROUND--

HERE COMES A CAB.

LISTEN, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I CAN--?

I'LL BE-- ALL RIGHT.

NO, THANK YOU.

MOMENTS LATER, AS THE TAXI PULLS AWAY FROM THE CURB --

THE BAXTER BUILDING, PLEASE.

HUH? YA'LL HAFTA SPIT IT OUT, LADY!

THESE NEW-FANGLED PLASTIC SHIELDS, Y'KNOW.

PERTECTS A POOR CABBIE FROM MUGGERS, PERVERTS-- EVEN SOUNDS!

I SAID-- THE BAXTER BUILDING.

OH--THERE.

WELL, OKAY. BUT I STEER CLEAR'A THAT PLACE, MOSTLY--

--EVER SINCE THEM FOUR FREAKS MOVED IN, BACK IN THE 60'S.

YOU KNOW THE ONES I MEAN.

WEIRDOS, EVER' LAST ONE OF 'EM.

AN' LADY, THIS NEW YORK CABBIE KNOWS WEIRDOS.'

I AIN'T PREJUDICE', Y'UNDERSTAND. WHY, SOME'A MY BEST FRIENDS ARE--

BUT THEM BOZOS! WHY, ONE OF 'EM JUMPED IN MY HACK, BACK IN '61-- THE INVISIBLE GIRL, IT WAS--

'COURSE, I DIDN'T KNOW IT WHEN I PICKED 'ER UP, OR I WOULDN'T'A.

BUT WHEN I GOT 'ER HERE TO WHERE SHE WUZ GOIN', SHE WUZ EATEN ALL AWAY, LIKE THEY SAY--

--NUTHIN' LEFT OF 'ER BUT A DOLLAR BILL, FLOATIN' IN THE AIR!

EVER SINCE THEN, I'VE-- HUH?

WHAZZAT SOUND? ALMOST LIKE A--

OH NO-- NO!!

I HADDA DO IT, DIDN'T I?

I HADDA COME HERE!!

IT'S THEM!

FREEZE!!

I KNEW IT! I KNEW THINGS'D GET WEIRD IF I TOOK A FARE TA THIS PLACE!

WHOOSH

KEEP YER MONEY, LADY! JUS' DO ME A FAVOR, OKAY?

NEX' TIME, TAKE THE SUBWAY!

ACE TRUCK

MORE POSSESSED NOW, ALICIA WALKS SURE STEPS INTO THE BAXTER BUILDING--

--BYPASSING THE REGULAR ELEVATORS, WHICH GO ONLY TO THE FIRST 29 FLOORS--

--TO STAND BEFORE A LESS OBVIOUS ONE, AND PRESS A HIDDEN STUD ON HER WATCH.

SURE, SURE--WE KNOW YOU'VE SEEN THIS SHTICK BEFORE, BUT WE WANTED TO LAY A LITTLE LIGHT STUFF ON YOU--

--CAUSE HERE'S WHERE IT STARTS GETTING STICKY--!

HELLO, ALICIA. WE JUST GOT BACK FROM THE LAND OF THE INHUMANS.*

WE'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE.

HEY, 'LISHA-- IF YOU COME UP SHORT FOR SOMEBODY TO BE YOUR VALENTINE--

CUT IT OUT, SPROUT-- BEFORE I HOSE YA DOWN!

HOW'S IT GOIN' ALICIA BABY?

BEN! YOU'RE-- HERE--!?

WHERE'D YA THINK I'D BE?

OUT SELLIN' TICKETS TO A WILLIAM BENDIX FILM FESTIVAL?

*CLEVER TIE-IN WITH OUR LAST ISSUE.
--ROY, THE KONTINUITY KID.

YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND!* THERE WAS A *FIGHT*--A *TERRIBLE* FIGHT--

YOU BEEN PUFFIN' ON *BANANAS,* SWEETIE? LIKE *SUZIE* SAID, WE JUST GOT BACK FROM TAKIN' *MEDUSA* HOME--AMONG *OTHER* THINGS.

AND YOU WERE *BEATEN* --CARRIED AWAY BY A STRANGE MAN WHO CARRIED HIMSELF *ARKON!* HE--

WHEN DID ALL THIS *HAPPEN?*

JUST NOW-- NEAR THE *GARMENT* DISTRICT.

BETWEEN TORTURED ***SOBS,*** *HER COMPOSURE NOW GIVING WAY, THE YOUNG SCULPTRESS* ***GASPS OUT*** *THE EVENTS OF THE PAST HALF HOUR--*

AND HIS *SKIN,* BEN-- IT FELT JUST LIKE *YOURS!*

THE LUCKY *STIFF.*

HE HAD *YOUR VOICE,* TOO-- *ONLY--*

ONLY *WHAT,* ALICIA?

ONLY--HE DIDN'T *SPEAK* THE WAY THAT *BEN* DOES--

HE USED WORDS-- MORE THE WAY *YOU* DO, REED.

YES, I HADN'T *REALIZED* IT BEFORE --BUT IT'S *TRUE!*

A GUY THAT LOOKS LIKE *ME*--AN' YAKS LIKE *REED?*

YEESH! THAT'S WHAT *I* CALL *DOUBLE JEOPARDY!*

IZZAT *ALL,* HONEY?

EXCEPT-- FOR *THIS.*

A PIECE OF HIS *SHIRT!* I FOUND IT IN MY HAND-- AFTER HE *VANISHED.*

IF NOT FOR *IT,* I'D THINK IT WAS ALL JUST A *DREAM!*

WE KNOW A GUY NAMED *ARKON,* REED?

SHOULD STAND OUT IN A *CROWD.* RIDES A *WINGED MONSTER*--THROWS *THUNDERBOLTS--!*

I'M STARTING TO GET A *GLIMMER,* JOHNNY--

AFTER WHILE, I'LL EXAMINE THE RECORDS WE EXCHANGE WITH THE *AVENGERS,* AS PART OF OUR RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT.

RIGHT NOW, I'M *EXPECTING* SOMEONE-- SOMEONE I'D LIKE ALL OF YOU TO *MEET.*

YOU *COMING,* BEN?

IN A MINUTE, *KID.*

FIRST, I GOT A LITTLE GLIMMER ALL MY *OWN*--

--AN' I THINK I'LL STAY HERE AN' *CHECK IT OUT.*

YET, ONCE **ALONE**, BEN STAYS PUT ONLY FOR A **MOMENT**--

--THEN STRIDES UNHESITATINGLY DOWN A LONG **CORRIDOR**--

--AND SIXTY SECONDS LATER, INTO THE MASSIVE **COMMUNI-CENTER** ON THE **31ST FLOOR**--

BLAST! AIN'T **EASY** WORKIN' THESE DIALS, WHEN YA GOT FINGERS THE SIZE'A *JACKHAMMERS.*

LESSEE IF IT'S **WORKIN'**--

THIS IS **BASHFUL BENJY,** CALLIN' **CRYSTAL** IN THE **GRAND REFUGE**--

THAT'S **"GREAT** REFUGE," BEN-- AND THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SO **FORMAL.**

WHAT CAN WE **DO** FOR YOU, THAT WAS NOT DONE BEFORE YOU **LEFT** US, A FEW SHORT HOURS AGO?

NONE'A YER **SHOTS** NOW, QUICKIE--

LISSEN, CYRSTAL-- COULD I BORROW YER DOG **LOCKJAW** FOR A WHILE?

WHY, **SURELY.** HE ALWAYS **LOVES** HIS LITTLE ROMPS WITH HIS **UNCLE BEN.**

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO **WALK** HIM ANYHOW--

--SO HE'S **ALL YOURS!**

OVER AND **OUT**

LIKE THEY SAY ON THE TEEVEE-- **TEN-FOUR!**

WURF!

YOU KNOW, LOCKJAW, OL' PAL-- SOMETIMES I THINK THE *MAIN* REASON I LIKE TO HAVE YOU AROUND--

--IS THAT YER ONE'A THE FEW BOZOS THIS SIDE'A THE **HULK** THAT'S EVEN UGLIER'N **ME!**

HEY! NOW **CUT THAT OUT!**

SLURRP!

YOU GOT A TONGUE LIKE BLASTED *SANDPAPER!*

NOW **PAY ATTENTION,** POOCH! I GOT YA HERE 'CAUSE YOU CAN TRAVEL THRU **DIMENSIONS** AN' ALL THAT CRUD--

--AN' 'CAUSE I GOT SOMETHIN' HERE FOR YA TA **SNIFF!**

OKAY, PAL?

SNURF SNURF

OKAY--NOW **FIND** THE JOE THAT **LOST** THIS RAG! **GOT** IT?

BY GEORGE, I THINK HE'S **GOT** IT.

BUT **S'HELP** ME-- IF WE TURN UP NEXT TO A **FIRE HYDRANT--!**

ZAP!

THEN, EVEN AS A FEW LAST **MOLECULES** TWINKLE INVISIBLY--

BEN-- ARE YOU COMING, OR--?

STRANGE. I COULD HAVE **SWORN** I HEARD HIS VOICE UP HERE IN THE COMMUNI-CENTER.

WELL, I'LL JUST HAVE TO BREAK THE NEWS TO HIM **LATER.**

NEXT: A RAPID **CONTRACTION** OF COSMICALLY ELASTICIZED **MUSCULATURE,** AND--

SORRY, MR. DeVOOR. I WANTED **BEN GRIMM** TO HEAR THIS, **TOO.**

BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE **VANISHED** INTO THIN AIR!

QUITE ALL RIGHT, MR.-- ER-- FANTASTIC. BUT SHALL WE GET DOWN TO, AH, **BUSINESS?**

WHAT BUSINESS **IS** IT, REED?

YOU'VE BEEN ACTING SO **MYSTERI-OUSLY--**

NO CLOAK AND DAGGER **INTENDED,** HONEY. IF WE HADN'T BEEN CALLED AWAY TO THE **HIMALAYAS,** I'D ALREADY HAVE **TOLD** YOU.

AS YOU KNOW, AT MY SUGGESTION, WE QUIETLY **INCORPORATED** SEVERAL MONTHS AGO-- BECAME **"THE FANTASTIC FOUR, INC."** WITH MYSELF AS CHAIRMAN AND **PRINCIPAL STOCKHOLDER.**

AND WHY **NOT?** IT'S YOUR **PATENTS** THAT KEEP THE F.F. **SOLVENT.**

BUT THAT'S JUST **IT,** DARLING.

WE'RE **NOT** **"IN THE BLACK"** ANY MORE--SO I'M **SELLING OUT!**

WHAT--??

IT'S REALLY QUITE **SIMPLE,** MRS. FANTASTIC. YOU **FOUR**-- SINCE I UNDERSTAND **MADAME MEDUSA** IS NO LONGER ONE OF YOU*-- ARE A POTENTIALLY VALUABLE **PROPERTY,** THANKS TO YOUR HUSBAND'S **INVENTIVE GENIUS.**

THE FAR **LARGER** COMPANY WHICH **I** REPRESENT HAS MADE A, I MUST SAY, RATHER **GENEROUS OFFER** FOR **F.F., INC.**

*LAST ISH. --ROY.

BUT-- THAT MEANS WE WOULDN'T BE WORKING FOR **OURSELVES** ANY LONGER-- BUT FOR **SOMEONE ELSE!**

I KNOW MONEY'S **TIGHT,** BOSS-MAN -- BUT ISN'T THERE **SOME OTHER WAY?**

I WON'T LET YOU **DO** IT, REED!

I'M AFRAID YOU'VE **NO CHOICE--ANY** OF YOU.

I OWN **51%** AND **CONTROLLING INTEREST**-- SO WHAT I SAY **GOES**--

--AND I'VE **ACCEPTED** MR. DeVOOR'S OFFER!

THUS DO **SOME** WORLDS END-- NOT WITH A **BANG**, BUT WITH A HUSKY **WHISPER**.

MEANWHILE, THERE ARE **OTHER** WORLDS THAN THOSE OF CAPITAL GAIN AND HIGH FINANCE-- AND IN ONE OF **THOSE** WE FIND--

NUTS!

I SHOULD'A **KNOWN** THIS WASN'T GONNA BE AS EASY AS IT LOOKED ON **PAPER.**

I DUNNO WHAT INSPIRED YA TO TELEPORT US **HERE,** POOCH--

BUT THIS **AIN'T** THE PLACE WHERE THAT **OTHER THING** CAME FROM!

SNURF SNURF

RALF!

UH OH. **NOW** WHAT?

OH, **GREAT!**

NO **WONDER** YOU SNIFFED OUT **THIS** DIMENSION INSTEAD'A THE ONE **I** WANTED!

WIFFLE BLEEK!

TO **YOU,** THAT BUG-EYED MINI-MONSTER'S THE SAME AS A **JACKRABBIT.**

HEY! COME **BACK** HERE, YOU!

WURPH!

WHAT A REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT THIS IS!

BLEEKBLEEKBLEE

URF URF

WHOA THERE! SLOW DOWN, SNOOPY!

WURPH?

THIS IS WHERE YOU AN' ME GET OFF.

YER BEM-CHASIN' DAYS ARE THRU, FIDO!

WE'RE SUPPOSED'TA BE HUNTIN' FOR WHAT USETA BE ATTACHED TA THIS HUNK'A SHIRT--

REMEMBER?

SNUFF SNURF

THAT'S BETTER.

NOW, START EARNIN' YER KEEP, OR IT'S BACK TA WATCHIN' RE-RUNS OF MORRIS THE CAT.

WELL WADDAYA KNOW!

I THINK I JUST SAID THE MAGIC WORD!

FZZZT!

YEP! THIS MUST BE THE PLACE, ALRIGHT!

DISNEY-LAND EAST--

ONLY THING IS, IT'S EAST O' THE SUN AN' WEST O' THE MOON!

RULF?

LUCKY FOR *US*, ROVER, THE *GATE'S* OPEN, SO I DON'T HAVETA--

YEESH! MAYBE *NOT* SO LUCKY--

--'CAUSE *HERE COMES THE WELCOME WAGON!*

OKAY, OKAY-- BY *NOW*, ANY MARVELITE WHO'S BEEN AROUND MORE THAN A *YEAR* OR TWO HAS ALREADY FIGURED OUT JUST WHERE *"HERE"* IS--

ARRRRRRRR

--AND CAN AWARD HIMSELF A *NO-PRIZE* WITH *STANNOUS FLOURIDE*--

BUT, WE'LL JUST KEEP YOU LATE-COMERS IN SUSPENSE FOR A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, AS--

WAITAMINNIT! LAY OFF, WILLYA?

WILL YOU CREEPOS STOP ACTIN' LIKE THE *BOSTON STRANGLER* JUST RANG THE DOORBELL?

AWRIGHT, IF THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GOTTA *BE*, THEN--

NO MORE NICE GUY!

POW!

PHTH!

THAT'S MORE *LIKE* IT!

NOW, IF YOU CLOWNS WANNA PLAY *ONE-ON-ONE* FER A WHILE, I'LL BE GLAD TO *OBLIGE* YA.

OTHER-WISE--

S'NO USE! THEY'RE JUST A BUNCHA CRUMMY ROBOTS-- EXACTLY LIKE I FIGURED.

ANDROIDS-- ALIENS-- ROBOTS--!

WHATEVER HAPPENED TA FIGHTIN' JUST PLAIN OL' BAD GUYS?

HEY NOW! SOUNDS LIKE THE SECOND STRING'S STILL AT IT!

BUT LOCKJAW'S CUT OUT FER SOMEWHERE ELSE-- SO IT AIN'T HIM THEY'RE MILLIN' AROUND.

THEN WHO IN BLAZES--?

HOLY COW! IT'S-- ME!!

ME--AS BEN GRIMM! AN'-- SUZIE!!

GET AWAY FROM HER, YA CRUDHEADS, OR I'LL--

I DUNNO WHY I'M SO SURPRISED. AIN'T LIKE I WUZ BACK IN THE BRONX OR SOMEPLACE.

STILL, I GOTTA UPHOLD MY IMAGE AS THE IDOL O' MILLIONS, SO--

SORRY ABOUT THAT, QUASIMODO--

--BUT THIS IS WHERE I RING YER CHIMES!

BOMP!

"RING YER CHIMES"? SHEESH!

WHEN'S THE LAST TIME I HEARD THAT OLD CLINKER?

OH WELL--

KKKK!

THRA

Y'KNOW, YA JUST CAN'T GET DECENT HELP ANY MORE!

NOW, THIS AIN'T GONNA BE EASY, YOU TWO-- BUT I BETTER INTERDUCE MYSELF. I'M--

THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER!

CLOSE-- BUT NO CIGAR. NO, ACTUALLY, I'M--

HUH? WHY'RE YA POINTIN' BEHIND ME?

GGNNARRG!

OH FER PETE'S SAKE.

LISTEN, I'M RUNNIN' OUTTA *PATIENCE* WITH YOU ANTI-SOCIAL TYPES.

PHUD!

THIS OUGHTTA POLISH YOU OFF, SO'S I CAN TAKE CARE'A *BIZNESS!*

UH OH! I MIGHT'A *KNOWN* THERE'D BE A *FLAW* IN THE OINTMENT!

YER A LOT *STRONGER* IN THEM OTHER STIFFS, AINTCHA?

GREAT LITTLE *TALKER,* TOO.

GRRARRNN

I BETTER *PSYCH MYSELF* UP FER THE *KAYO PUNCH.*

HERE GOES: *IT'S CLOB--* =AWWK!=

LEAPIN' LIZARDS!

FRAK!

WON'T *ANYBODY* EVER LET ME FINISH A COTTON-PICKIN' *SENTENCE?*

I'M STARTIN' TA FEEL ALL *FRUSTRATED-LIKE.*

SNARRL!

YA MIGHT EVEN SAY I WUZ *TEED OFF!*

AN' WHEN *BROTHER BENJY* GETS *TEED OFF--*

--THINGS JUST NATCHERLY START HAPPENIN'!

SOCKOW!

THRAK!

KER-

SPLUSH!

LOOKS LIKE FRANKY AIN'T COMIN' UP FER *AIR--* AN' *NO WONDER!*

I'M BETTIN' THAT *MOAT'S* FULL OF SOME KIND'A *ACID.*

NICE PLACE.

HAH! I WUZ *WONDERIN'* WHERE YOU'D GONE TO, POOCH.

HAPPY SCRAPS-- BUT DON'T *TAKE OFF,* HEAR?

KRUNCH MUNCH URP!

THIS JOINT AIN'T EXACTLY *GROWIN'* ON ME.

GLAD YER SAFE, OL' BUDDY! THEM ROBOTS OF YERS WENT WHACKO WHEN WE LANDED, AN'--

LOOK-- I DON'T WANNA SHAKE YOU TWO UP OR NUTHIN'--BUT I AIN'T REED RICHARDS! NEVER WUZ!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU AND BEN WENT UP YEARS AGO INTO THAT COSMIC STORM--

AND YOU CAME BACK --THE WAY YOU ARE!

YEAH, WE TOOK THE SAME SPACE-HOP IN MY WORLD-- ONLY THERE, THERE WUZ FOUR OF US.

YOUR-- WORLD--!?

A PAL'A REED'S OUGHTTA DIG THIS: I'M FROM WHATCHA CALL YER 'NOTHER DIMENSION!

AN' IN MY BALL PARK, THE THING IS BENJAMIN J. GRIMM!

HUH? YOU MEAN-- YOU'RE ME?

CHECK! I ENDED UP HERE ONCE BEFORE*-- AN' YER REED-THING EXPLAINED IT ALL TA ME.

WHERE I COME FROM, SUZIE'S MARRIED TA REED, AN' REED'S NORMAL-- MORE OR LESS.

I-- THINK I'M BEGINNING TO UNDER-STAND--!

*F.F. #118. HOO-HAH!--ROY.

AFTER ALL, HE SPEAKS JUST AS YOU DO, BEN DARLING--!

GETTIN' BACK TA STRETCH-- I MEAN, REED--

I GOT A REPORT HE WUZ IN MY WORLD TODAY--AN' GOT ZAPPED BY SOME CREEP NAMED ARKON.

NOPE--

YOU TWO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?

--WE JUST CAME HERE TA THANK REED AGAIN, FOR GETTIN' RID OF MY FLAMIN' AN' STRETCHIN' POWERS, WHICH I NEVER WANTED ANYWAY.

COULD'A USED 'EM TONIGHT, THOUGH, BEFORE YOU SHOWED UP, THANKS.

To Ben and Sue my two best friends in the whole world

Love Reed

FERGIT IT.

LISSEN-- YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT US, SO I'LL TAKE A CHANCE YER ON THE LEVEL.

WE ALSO CAME HERE TO TRY AN' TALK REED INTO LEAVIN' THIS DUMP.

HE SOUNDED BAD LATELY, ON THE PHONE-- LIKE HE WUZ UNDER A STRAIN.

AIN'T HEALTHY, ANYHOW--SPENDIN' ALL YER TIME ON ROBOT RESEARCH!

HE KEPT WARNIN' US TA KEEP AWAY-- BUT HE WOULDN'T SAY WHY--

SO WE CAME ANYWAY-- AND THEN YOU SHOWED UP.

ANY IDEA HOW COME YER REED MIGHT'A SKIPPED OUT--

NONE-- UNLESS IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE METAL SIGN WE SAW HERE WHEN WE FIRST CAME UP.

'COURSE I GOT NO IDEA OF WHAT IT MEANS--

--OR WHY THIS ARKON GUY WUZ CHASIN' 'IM?

--BUT IT WUZN'T HERE THE LAST TIME WE STOPPED BY--!

REED RICHARDS ROBOTICS, INC. A DIVISION OF INTER-RELATED TECHNOCRACIES, UNLIMITED

MEANWHILE, BACK IN WHAT WE NAÏVELY REFER TO AS THE "REAL WORLD"..

LOOK, SUE, ALL OF YOU-- I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT WITH YOU ON THIS, BUT--

BUT YOU MAKE THE DECISIONS--AND THE REST OF US STICK WITH THEM!

RIGHT ON, SIS!

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG HERE, MY GOOD FRIENDS. I CAN SENSE IT.

YOU'LL FORGIVE ME--

WANNA BET?

--IF I SAY I BELIEVE YOU ARE ALL MAKING A MOUNTAIN OUT OF THE MEREST OF MOLEHILLS.

THINGS WILL CONTINUE WITH THE THE FANTASTIC FOUR AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN: SAVING THE WORLD, AND ALL THAT.

WE WOULDN'T INTERFERE IN ANY MAJOR WAY--

THAT'S LIKE THE GIRL WHO SAID SHE WAS A LITTLE BIT PREGNANT!

CAN IT, MISTER! I'M MY OWN BOY-- AND I'M STAYING THAT WAY!

JOHNNY--!

HE'LL COME AROUND, MR. RICHARDS.

NOW, I'M AFRAID I'VE A SCHEDULE TO ADHERE TO.

HERE'S A PEN, COULD WE, AH--?

OF COURSE, MR. DeVOOR.

YOU REALIZE, OF COURSE, THAT WE FOUR WILL STILL CONTROL OUR OWN AFFAIRS--!

OF COURSE, OF COURSE.

AH-- JOHN HANCOCK HIMSELF WOULD BE PROUD OF YOU, MY DEAR SIR.

NOW, I SUGGEST WE ALL RETIRE TO YOUR DEN FOR A FINAL TOAST, ERE I DEPART.

OF COURSE, MR. DeVOOR.

AND PLEASE BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY--

--IN YOUR WHOLE LIFETIME, YOU'LL NEVER REGRET WHAT YOU'VE JUST DONE!

EARLY TODAY, A DEFEATED THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD PUT IT A WEE BIT DIFFERENTLY-- IF ONLY ANYONE HAD NOTICED IT AT THE TIME--

HE SAID--AND WE QUOTE:

"YOU CAN'T FIGHT IT!"

INTERLOCKING TECHNOLOGIES, UNLIMITED

SIGNATURE A. E. de Voor Reed Richards

DATE: FEB. 14, 1975

MAYBE HE DIDN'T MEAN OUR OLD FRIEND ARKON, AFTER ALL--!

NEXT: WORLDS WAR I, II, AND III, INCLUSIVE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

TM

REED! BEN CAN'T HOLD OUT *ANY LONGER* AGAINST THAT *TYRANNOSAUR!* *WE'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!*

WE-WE *CAN'T*, TORCH! *LIVE OR DIE*..

...THE *THING FIGHTS ALONE!*

A brilliant scientist—— his best friend—— the woman he loves—— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! They are the FANTASTIC FOUR—— and the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

ALL THE WORLD WARS AT ONCE!*

"THIS IS ONLY A TEST!"

THAT'S WHAT **REED RICHARDS** TELLS HIMSELF AS A SALVO OF BLUNT-EDGED **MINI-MISSILES** SUDDENLY ERUPTS FROM THE WALL IN THIS SEALED-OFF CHAMBER IN THE **BAXTER BUILDING.**

YES, IT'S MERELY A **TEST**-- OH, BUT ONE THING WE FORGOT TO **MENTION:**

SOME OF THE MISSILES ARE FILLED WITH **LIVE EXPLOSIVES!**

*WITH A TIP OF THE HAT FOR THE **TITLE** TO SCIENCE FICTION AUTHOR **GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER** FROM:

ROY THOMAS	RICH BUCKLER	JOE SINNOTT	GLYNIS WEIN
writer/ editor	artist	embellisher	colorist

JOE ROSEN letterer

NOW LET'S GET **ON** WITH IT, SHALL WE--?

INSTANTLY, REED'S **ELASTICIZED FORM** RESPONDS...

...AND HE **THREADS** HIS SERPENTINE WAY AMONG THE PROJECTILES, **EVADING** THEM ALL...

...OR **ALMOST** ALL!

BOOM

BIFF

UNNH!

THE CHARGE IS NOT **LETHAL** --NOT TO ONE WHOSE BODY **GIVES** WITH THE BLAST--

YET, THERE IS SCANT TIME FOR **SELF-CONGRATULATION**...

FOR, IT'S TIME FOR-- DARE WE SAY IT?-- **PHASE TWO!**

WITH EYE-BLINDING SPEED, THE **FAR WALL** OPENS -- REVEALING ANOTHER OF THE DIABOLICAL DEVICES DESIGNED BY **PROF. CHARLES XAVIER**, MYSTERIOUS RECLUSE OF **WESTCHESTER COUNTY.**

IN THE SELFSAME MOMENT, MR. FANTASTIC **RECOGNIZES** ITS FUNCTION:

A LASER!

AND, EVEN AS HIS AGILE **MIND** SENSES THE NATURE OF THE MENACE...

ZZIT!

...HIS TRAINED **BODY** RESPONDS, HIS LIMBS **ELONGATING** TO AVOID THE POTENTIALLY-DEADLY **BEAM**...

...RESPONDS JUST **BARELY ENOUGH!**

NOW, FOR PERHAPS THE **FIRST** TIME IN HIS LIFE-- REED RICHARDS **FREEZES!**

HE KNOWS A FEELING AKIN TO-- **FEAR!**

AND THUS, HE TAKES THE ACTION HE HAD HOPED **NEVER** TO BE FORCED TO TAKE:

WITH A **SPASM OF PAIN,** HIS RIGHT ARM **STRETCHES** ACROSS THE DEATH-FILLED CHAMBER...

...HIS HAND GRASPING **DESPERATELY** AT THE EMERGENCY **MASTER SWITCH...**

...TO **TURN OFF** ANY AND ALL DEVICES STILL TO COME!

AND, AS HIS ARM RETURNS SLOWLY, **AGONIZINGLY,** TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM-- HE **KNOWS!**

THEN-- IT'S **TRUE!**

I NEVER DARED **ADMIT** THE POSSIBILITY-- EVEN TO **MYSELF--**

--BUT, I'M **LOSING** MY ELASTICITY --MY POWER TO **STRETCH** AND **RETRACT** FULLY!

BATTLE SIMULATION CHAMBER

I'M BECOMING LIKE A **RUBBER BAND**-- THAT'S BEEN STRETCHED OUT OF SHAPE **ONE TIME TOO MANY!**

I'VE ALWAYS **THEORIZED** THIS COULD HAPPEN-- AS I GREW **OLDER.**

BUT, I'M NO MORE **READY** FOR IT-- THAN IF I **HADN'T.**

IF THAT HAD BEEN A **REAL** BATTLE IN THERE, I MIGHT HAVE **FAILED** THE OTHERS AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT-- PUT **THEIR** LIVES IN DANGER, AS **WELL.**

I MUST **TELL** THEM-- TELL THEM **EVERYTHING**-- BUT HAVE I **COURAGE** ENOUGH FOR THAT?

REED? I **THOUGHT** I HEARD A DOOR SLAM DOWN THIS WAY.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN **DOING** OFF HERE BY YOURSELF?

OH, HELLO, SUE HONEY-- I DIDN'T NOTICE--

OBVIOUSLY! I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN ANY LESS NOTICED IF I'D TURNED INVISIBLE.

WHAT'S WRONG, DARLING? SOMEHOW, I THINK IT'S MORE THAN JUST THAT BUSINESS WITH INTERLOCKING TECHNOLOGIES, UNLIMITED...!

HOW CAN I TELL HER--

--THAT THE SLIGHT STIFFNESS I FELT WHEN I BATTLED SOME MINIONS OF DR. DOOM RECENTLY--*

--MAY HAVE SIGNALED THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF MR. FANTASTIC'S CAREER?

IT'S JUST THAT... I'M WORRIED ABOUT JOHNNY.

JOHNNY...?

*ISH #157. --ROY.

YOUR BROTHER, LADY-- REMEMBER?

HE WAS SO ANGRY WITH ME FOR SELLING FANTASTIC FOUR, INC., TO DeVOOR'S COMPANY...

...THAT HE STOMPED OUT, AND HASN'T BEEN BACK ALL DAY!

IS THAT-- REALLY IT, REED? IS IT?

CERTAINLY, HONEY. WHAT ELSE WOULD IT BE?

I DON'T KNOW, MY DARLING. BUT I MUST FIND OUT...

... NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT HURTS US BOTH!

BULL!

THAT'S WHAT REED'S FEEDIN' SUE AND ME--

PURE, UNADULTERATED BULL!

FIRST, REED INCORPORATES THE F.F.-- WITH HIMSELF AS MAJORITY STOCKHOLDER --THAT'S COOL--

--BUT TO SELL US OUT FOR A PROFIT TO THAT TECHNOLOGIES OUTFIT--

AW, WHAT AM I GRIPIN' ABOUT?

REED'S ALWAYS KNOWN WHAT HE'S DOING BEFORE, HASN'T HE?

LIKE SUE SAID-- IT'S HIS INVENTIONS THAT SUPPORT THE WHOLE BUNCH OF US, AND--

NOPE! THAT'S A COP-OUT-- AND I WON'T GO THAT ROUTE!

REED BETRAYED US-- PURE AND SIMPLE--

--AND I'M NOT GONNA STAND FOR IT!

FLAME ON!

EVEN REED RICHARDS CAN'T MUCK AROUND WITH THE HUMAN TORCH!

GOOD GRAVY! I THOUGHT THAT WAS JUST SOME KOOK DRESSED UP LIKE THAT FLAME-GUY!

TORCH OR NOT-- HE'S STILL A KOOK!

YEAH-- AS IF THERE AREN'T ALREADY ENOUGH POT-HOLES IN THIS CITY--!

OKAY, STORM-- SO YOU MADE YOUR DRAMATIC EXIT!

THAT AND A DIME'LL GET YOU A XEROX OF A CUP OF COFFEE.

YOU STILL CAN'T GET OVER THE FACT THAT YOU BLEW IT WITH A GAL NAMED CRYSTAL!

FACT IS, YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE SO UPTIGHT ALL THE TIME, DON'T YOU?

AND, THOUGH YOU HAVEN'T ADMITTED IT-- EVEN TO YOURSELF--

--YOU KNOW JUST WHERE YOU'RE GONNA HEAD--

--TO FIND A SYMPATHETIC SHOULDER:

THIS SWAMPY AREA--

AND, LAST TIME OUT, A CERTAIN BLUE-SKINNED YOUNG LADY SHOWED YOU JUST WHERE TO STAND--

--TO GO BACK AND FORTH AT WILL.

--IN WHAT'S LEFT OF THE WILDS OF LONG ISLAND!

HERE'S WHERE YOU FIRST DISCOVERED THE GATEWAY TO WHAT WE LOVINGLY CALL THE FIFTH DIMENSION--*

HERE I GO- DOING THE FADE-OUT BIT--!

I JUST HOPE--

*HUMAN TORCH #3, N'EST-CE PAS? --ROY THE BILINGUAL BOY.

--THAT 5D'S THE ONLY PLACE IT DOES CONNECT TO--

--'CAUSE I CAN'T CONTROL WHERE I'M GOING, ANY MORE THAN A WOODCHIP IN A MAELSTROM!

FEEL STRANGE-- DIZZY-- LIKE I'M BEING TORN APART PAINLESSLY-- THEN REASSEMBLED--

--WHICH IS PROBABLY EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED!

MAIN THING IS, HERE I AM IN THE CENTRAL PLAZA OF THE 5D CITY WHERE PHINEAS DWELLS--

--AND HIS DAUGHTER VALERIA, OF COURSE.

COULDN'T EXPECT THEM TO BE ON THE SPOT, NATCH-- BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I'VE SHAKEN UP THE LOCALS A BIT.

WELL, WHY NOT?

IT ISN'T EVERY DAY THEY GET TO SEE THE HUMAN TORCH!

THINK I'LL GIVE 'EM A THRILL-- DO MY "FLAME ON" BIT, AND--

UH OH! NOW WHAT?

ONE OF THE ACCURSED ANDRONES!

TAKE HIM!

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE, PEOPLE--

YOU'RE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE HERE!

I'M THE TORCH, REMEMBER? I EVEN SAVED YOUR LITTLE MUNCHKIN-WORLD ONCE, AND--

DO NOT LISTEN TO HIS LIES!

TAKE HIM-- ALIVE IF YOU CAN, BUT TAKE HIM!

OKAY, LIVER-LIP... I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE COMIN' FROM, BUT IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT--

--YOU'RE GONNA FIND OUT YOU JUST GRABBED A REAL HOT POTATO!

NOW THE FAT'S REALLY IN THE FIRE! FOR ALL I KNOW, THOSE GUNS OF THEIRS CAN TURN ME INTO A MESS OF SPLIT ATOMS.

OH WELL-- NOBODY LIVES FOREVER!

LOOK, FELLA-- JUST PUT THAT BUCK ROGERS PREMIUM DOWN, AND NO ONE'LL GET HURT!

MEANINGLESS PHRASES WILL NOT DETER THE GUARDSMEN OF GOMATH, CAPITAL OF THE 5th DIMENSION!

THAT'S IT! DON'T LET THAT MECHANICAL MONSTER GET AWAY!

BRING HIM DOWN! SHOW THOSE METAL DEVILS THIS WORLD IS OURS!

METAL DEVILS? LISTEN, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG! I--

FIRE!

FSSSS

OH NO! THOSE RIFLES-- THEY SHOOT ICE!

FSSS

MY FLAME-- G-GOING OUT--! FALLING--!

G-GETTING COLD-- FROZEN-- CAN'T EVEN SPEAK--!

I'M S-SO V-V-VERY--

FSS

FSS

--C-COLD--!

TAKE HIM! WE SHALL DISMANTLE HIM IN THE CENTER OF THE PLAZA!

DISMANTLE? OH MY GOD-- THEY THINK I'M SOME KIND OF ROBOT!

THEY'LL TEAR ME LIMB FROM LIMB--AND NEVER KNOW I WAS REALLY ALIVE--

--UNTIL I'M DEAD!

STOP!
YOU KNOW NOT WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
IT'S PHINEAS-- AND VALERIA!
PHINEAS IS TOP DOG IN THIS WORLD--
BUT WILL THIS BLOOD-CRAZED MOB LISTEN TO HIM, OR--?
YES! IT'S WORKING--!
THEY'VE PUT ME DOWN!
BUT, I CAME-- THIS CLOSE --TO DEATH!
FOR A MOMENT, I WAS JUST A HELP-LESS HUMAN BEING --AND NOT A SO-CALLED SUPERHERO!
ACTIVATOR-HAPPY FOOLS! THIS YOUNG MAN IS A FLESH-AND-BLOODER, NOT A ROBOT.
BUT, THE ACCURSED ANDRONES MAY BE STRIKING ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY AT THIS VERY INSTANT!
NOW DISPERSE-- SEARCH-- AND DESTROY!
THANKS, PHINEAS-- AND HI, VAL--
BUT, I'M AFRAID I DON'T GET ANY OF THIS.
WHAT IN BLAZES IS AN ANDRONE-- AND WHY'D THAT GOON SQUAD THINK I WAS ONE OF 'EM?
IT'S A LONG STORY, JOHNNY...
THEN START TELLIN' IT, FOR PETE'S SAKE!
JUST YESTERDAY, THE F.F. SAVED THIS PLACE-- NOW I DROP IN FOR A VISIT AND NEARLY GET LYNCHED!
I THINK I'VE GOT A RIGHT TO KNOW!
INDEED YOU DO, JOHNNY STORM...
BUT PERHAPS YOU WILL NOT BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU THAT WE ARE AT WAR...
...AND THE ENEMY IS...REED RICHARDS!
WHA--?

"ALLOW ME TO ***EXPLAIN***, MY YOUNG FRIEND:

"ONLY ***MINUTES*** AFTER YOU LEFT US, AN ***ALIEN CRAFT*** APPEARED FROM ***THIN AIR***...

"...AND FROM IT EMERGED ...THE ***ANDRONES!***

"THEY ARE CALLED THIS BECAUSE THEY ARE METALLIC ***ANDROIDS***-- WHICH SEEMED FROM THE FIRST TO BE CONTROLLED BY SOME ***FAR-OFF, UNSEEN POWER!***

"BEING BOTH ***HUGE*** AND FORMIDABLY ***ARMED***, THEY LAID WASTE TO MUCH OF OUR ***CITY***, BEFORE THEY WERE ***DRIVEN OUT***-- AT LEAST FOR THE ***MOMENT.***

SOUNDS LIKE WHOEVER'S ***BEHIND*** THOSE CREEPS WAS JUST WAITING FOR ***XEMU*** TO FALL FROM POWER--

--PROBABLY FIGURING THEY'D HAVE A ***BETTER*** CHANCE AGAINST MORE ***PEACE-LOVING*** TYPES.

NO DOUBT. MEANWHILE, COME ***THIS*** WAY-- WHERE WE'LL BE ***SAFER.***

THIS ***MULTI-VIEWER*** SHOWS US OUR ***ENEMY DIMENSION***-- AS CALCULATED BY OUR WORLD'S ***CHIEF SCIENTISTS.***

I THINK YOU'LL FIND IT-- ***DISTURBING.***

IT'S-- THE ***EARTH!*** NO-- ***WAIT***-- IT ***IS***-- AND IT ***ISN'T!***

THE MAN SPEAKING BEHIND THAT ***PRESIDENTIAL SEAL***-- IS ***NELSON ROCKEFELLER!***

YES! THIS IS A ***SECOND*** EARTH-- NOT ***UNLIKE*** YOUR OWN, BUT NOT QUITE ***IDENTICAL*** TO IT.

AND, FOR STILL-UNKNOWN REASONS, THIS EARTH HAS ***DECLARED WAR*** ON THE ***FIFTH DIMENSION***--

"--USING ***ANDROIDS*** DESIGNED CHIEFLY FOR ***THIS*** CORPORATION --

REED RICHARDS ROBOTICS, INC. A DIVISION OF INTER-RELATED TECHNOCRACIES, UNLIMITED

"--BY ***THIS*** MAN, WHOSE NAME IS--***REED RICHARDS!***

REED? NOW ***WAIT*** A MINUTE, PHINEAS--

YOU KNOW GOOD AND WELL THAT'S THE ***THING'S*** UGLY KISSER-- AND WHEN IT COMES TO ANDROIDS, HE COULDN'T FIND HIS ***TAIL*** WITH BOTH HANDS AND A ***COMPASS!*** I--

HUH? WHAT'S THAT ***HUMMING SOUND***--?

THE ***ANDRONES!*** ONE OF THEM MUST HAVE ***FOLLOWED*** US--

YES! JOHNNY STORM-- THAT IS AN ANDRONE!

Y'KNOW, PHINEAS-- SOMEHOW I THINK I'D HAVE FIGURED THAT OUT FOR MYSELF.

BUT NOW, SINCE I'M BETTIN' THAT'S NOT EXACTLY AN EGG-BEATER ON ITS RIGHT ARM--

RA

--I'D BETTER GET CRACKING!

UH OH! HERE COMES UP THE BACK-UP SQUAD, TO BOOT!

THEN, I'D BETTER TAKE A CHANCE AND CUT RIGHT THRU CENTER--

FRZZ

--SO THEY'LL KNOW THE HUMAN TORCH IS BACK IN TOWN!

SPLANG!

HMMM... LOOKS LIKE *HEAT* IS THEIR *BIG WEAKNESS!*

THEN, WILL YOU *LEAD* US, JOHNNY-- AGAINST THEIR *WORLD*?

I'LL *TELL* YOU, PHINEAS...

I DON'T LIKE *SNEAK ATTACKS.* NEVER *DID.*

IN OTHER WORDS, I'M *SIGNING ON--*

"--TILL WE FIND OUT *WHO'S BEHIND* THOSE JUNKYARD STORM-TROOPERS!"

WHILE, IN THE *HOME DIMENSION* OF THE ANDRONES THEMSELVES...

REED RICHARDS ROBOTICS, Inc.

A DIVISION OF

INTER-RELATED TECHNOCRACIES, UNLIMITED

I DON'T *GET* IT, PAL...

I WUZ HERE IN THIS WORLD OF YERS ONCE *BEFORE.* I *MET* THE REED RICHARDS WHO LOOKS LIKE *ME.*

HE DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THE *TYPE* TA GET HOOKED UP WITH A BIG *CORPORATION* WITH A NAME LIKE *INTER-RELATED TECHNOCRACIES.*

THAT'S JUST *IT.* HE *WASN'T,* MR.--UH--

JUST CALL ME THE *THING...*

AFTER ALL, *YOU'RE* THIS WORLD'S VERSION OF *BEN GRIMM--*

--ONLY INSTEAD OF *LUMPS* ALL OVER YER BOD, YOU GOT A WIFE LIKE *SUZIE* HERE,

LOCKJAW'LL STICK AROUND *HERE,* GNAWIN' ON THEM *ROBOTS* I CLOBBERED--*

MUNCH

KRUNCH

*LAST ISH. --R.

--WHILE *WE* HEAD FOR *NEW YORK.*

THAT *IS* WHAT YA *CALL* IT HERE, AIN'T IT--

--NUTHIN' PHONY LIKE *BIGVILLE* OR *COSMOPOLIS?*

YES. IN *MOST* WAYS, THING, I'M SURE *OUR* EARTH IS JUST LIKE THE ONE FROM WHICH *YOU* CAME.

GLAD TA *HEAR* IT, LADY...

BUT, I'LL SAY *THIS* FOR YOU PEOPLE:

YOU GOT *RATS* LIKE THEY WOULDN'T *BELIEVE* BACK IN *FUN CITY!*

GOOD LORD!

HOLY JUMPIN'--!

FACT IS, I'D FIGGER I'D WANDERED INTO AN OLD-TIME *MONSTER MOVIE*--

--EXCEPT THERE AIN'T NO *OVER-SIZE MONKEY* HANGIN' OFF THE *EMPIRE STATE BUILDIN'!*

BUT, THAT BABY'LL *DO*, MISTER--

THAT BABY'LL DO!

RRAARRR

AND, IF **OUR** BENJAMIN J. GRIMM LOOKED JUST A BIT MORE **CLOSELY**, HE'D SEE, BENEATH THE TYRANNOSAUR'S MASSIVE, FLAILING **TAIL**--

--A SMALL ARMY OF FULL-FLEDGED **VIKINGS**, DIRECT FROM THEIR LONG-RUN ENGAGEMENT IN THE **ELDER EDDA!**

BUT, HE'D BETTER LOOK **FAST**-- FOR, **THEY'RE** EVEN MORE FEARFUL THAN THE **REST** OF THE HUMAN POPULACE.

AFTER ALL, THEY NEVER EVEN **HEARD** OF CHARLES DARWIN!

SO, WE'LL SEE **NO MORE** OF THEM.

INSTEAD--

SKRAW!

SHEESH! IT'S A **PTER**-- UH, **TERRA**--

AWRIGHT, AWREADY!

RITTCH!

YOU COULD AT LEAST LET ME HANG A **NAME** ON YA, BEFORE YA **DIVE-BOMB** ME!

THING-- **LOOK OUT!**

ON **ANY** WORLD, YER STILL THE SAME SWEET **SUZIE,** AINTCHA?

ALWAYS WORRIED ABOUT **SOME-BODY ELSE!**

BUT, DON'T LOSE NO SLEEP OVER **ME,** KID...

I'M JUST **USIN'** THIS CREEPY CANARY TA HITCH A RIDE OVER TA THE NEXT **ROOF,** AN'--

AW NUTS!

SOME DAYS **NUTHIN'** GOES RIGHT--!

VIN

THE BLAMED THING **COULDN'T HOLD ME UP!**

I'M **FALLIN'**-- RIGHT TOWARD OL' **FRESH-FACE!**

WHEW! LEASTWAYS I MANAGED TO AVOID BEIN' A **BETWEEN-MEAL SNACK.**

RAAR

NOW, IF I CAN JUST REMEMBER THE LAST TEN **RODEO FLICKS** I SAW ON THE **TUBE**--

GNARRG

WHERE DID I GO WRONG?

SLAM!!

UH OH! HERE HE COMES!

I BETTER STOP BEATIN' AROUND THE BUSH--

--AN' UNLOAD MY EVER-LOVIN', BLUE-EYED SUNDAY PUNCH--

GRAAK

SOCK-

KOW!

--IF I EVER WANNA SEE MONDAY!

WELL, BLOW ME DOWN!

THING! YOU KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS --WITH JUST ONE BLOW!

I NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE IT!

YOU AIN'T LIVED, SONNY.

TELL YOU WHAT-- YOU GOT ANY MORE LIKE THIS AROUND, JUST BRING 'EM ON.

BEST TWO OUTTA THREE FALLS. WINNER GETS A FREE TEEVEE.

WHO'M I KIDDIN'? I'D RATHER RASSLE A DAGWOOD SANDWICH, ANY OL' DAY!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN-- THE **PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES--!**

SPEAKIN' OF **TV**-- THERE'S ONE IN THAT **STORE WINDOW!**

GUESS OL' **GERRY-BABY** WANTS TA CALM THE **PLEBES** DOWN, SO-- **HUH?**

THAT AIN'T **PRESIDENT FORD!**

IT'S **ROCKY!!**

...**MOST** OF THESE ATTACKS BY **CREATURES** AND **WARRIORS** OF **ANOTHER ERA** HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY **TURNED ASIDE...**

BUT, IT IS STILL **ADVISED** THAT ALL CITIZENS--

HEAR **THAT**? THE PREZ SAYS IT'S GONNA BE **OKAY!**

VINCE'S

YOUR PREZ-- NOT **MINE. I** DIDN'T VOTE FOR 'IM.

OR **FORD** EITHER, FAR AS **THAT** GOES.

...OUR DEFENSE-DEPT. **SCIENTISTS** HAVE DISCOVERED THE PRESENCE OF **ANOTHER EARTH,** EXISTING IN A DIMENSION **ALONGSIDE** OURS.

IT IS FROM **THERE** THAT THESE **TIME-PROBES** HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN LAUNCHED--

--BY MEANS OF A DEVICE **UNKNOWN** TO US AT PRESENT--

BUT, WE MUST USE ANY MEANS AT **HAND** TO--

HE THINKS **OUR** EARTH DID IT? THAT'S **CRAZY!**

OR **IS** IT? **REED'S** GOT A TIME-TRAVEL GIZMO, LEFT OVER FROM WHEN WE BATTLED **DOC DOOM** ONCE. MEBBE--

NAW! HE'D **NEVER** USE IT TO **ATTACK** ANYBODY. HE--

HEY! WHAT THE--?

PHOOMF!

KNOCKOUT GAS! I-- SAVE THE WHOLE-- BLAMED **CITY**--

--AN' ALL THEY DO IS--

--GAS ME--!

THUDD!

I'M **SORRY,** BUDDY.

BELIEVE ME I'M SORRY--

I--I **HAD** TO DO IT, SUE. **YOU** SEE THAT, DON'T YOU?

IF I HADN'T USED ONE OF **REED'S GAS-CAPSULES**, THE APPROACHING **TROOPS** MIGHT HAVE **OPENED FIRE**--!

YES, BEN. I KNOW.

YOU DID THE **RIGHT THING**. I'M SURE **HE'LL** UNDERSTAND...

*WITHIN MOMENTS, **BEN GRIMM**--TEST PILOT AND FRIEND OF NOTED (IF LONG-VANISHED) SCIENTIST **REED RICHARDS**--HAS IDENTIFIED THE **THING** TO THE AUTHORITIES WHO'VE PLACED NEW YORK UNDER **MARTIAL LAW**...*

ALL RIGHT, YOU CIVILIANS-- **CLEAR THE AREA!**

WE'VE GOT US A **HOSTAGE** NOW FROM THAT WORLD THAT'S **ATTACKING** US--

AND WE'RE GONNA FIND OUT WHAT'S **BEHIND** ALL THIS-- IF WE HAVE TO **SWEAT** IT OUT OF HIM!

TELL ME **AGAIN**, SUE.

TELL ME AGAIN ABOUT HOW I DID THE **RIGHT THING**.

AND **ME**...

...**I'LL** KEEP ON TRYIN' TO **BELIEVE** IT.

C'MON. LET'S GO HOME.

*WHILE, BACK ON **EARTH-I** (OOOPS! WRONG COMIC-MAG!)...*

THIS IS **MADNESS!**

JOHNNY DOESN'T ANSWER OUR SIGNAL-- AND **BEN** HAS DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A **TRACE**.

MAYBE A SPIN AROUND THE CITY IN THE **FANTASTICAR** WILL CLEAR AWAY SOME OF THE COBWEBS. THEN I CAN--

SUE-- WHAT'S **WRONG**?

TO COIN A PHRASE-- YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'VE JUST SEEN A **GHOST!**

PERHAPS-- I **HAVE**, REED! THE GHOST OF OUR WHOLE **WORLD!**

WHAT--?

COME LOOK AT THE **NEWS-BREAK MONITOR**-- **QUICKLY!**

GOOD LORD! IT CAN'T BE--!

--MASSIVE GLACIERS, ALREADY CRUSHING SMALL CITIES IN NORTHERN CANADA AND SCANDINAVIA, AND MOVING RELENTLESSLY SOUTHWARD--!

HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT-- ANOTHER ICE AGE!

AN ICE AGE!? BUT-- THAT'S ONE OF THE FEW THINGS AGAINST WHICH MANKIND HAS NO DEFENSE!

IT COULD MEAN-- THE END OF CIVILIZED LIFE ON EARTH!

"ALREADY, SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCOVERED A STRANGE RADIATION SOURCE WHICH SEEMS TO BE SPURRING THE GLACIERS' SUDDEN GROWTH AND MOVEMENT...

"THEY SAY IT COMES FROM SOME UNKNOWN WORLD BEYOND TIME...

"...SOME UNGUESSED FIFTH DIMENSION...!"

FIFTH DIMENSION? BUT, IF THEY'RE RIGHT, REED-- THAT'S THE UNIVERSE OF PHINEAS AND VALERIA!

AND EVEN IF THE HUMAN RACE SURVIVES-- IT COULD MEAN A WAR BETWEEN WORLDS WHICH EXIST SIDE BY SIDE!

IF ONLY WE COULD BE SURE--!

PERHAPS WE CAN.

I WAS ALREADY WORKING ON THE PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING ONE-WAY VISUAL CONTACT WITH PHINEAS' WORLD.

IT WAS TO BE A SURPRISE FOR JOHNNY, SINCE I KNOW HE'S FOND OF VALERIA.

BUT NOW-- IT MAY TURN OUT TO BE A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

THERE! I THINK I'M GETTING--

OH, NO-- NO! IT JUST-- ISN'T POSSIBLE!

BUT IT'S TRUE! WE'RE SEEING IT-- WITH OUR OWN EYES!

JOHNNY'S ALREADY THERE IN THE FIFTH DIMENSION-- WITH VALERIA, AND PHINEAS--

AND, THEY'RE STANDING IN THE MIDST OF WHAT CAN ONLY BE--

--AN INVASION FORCE, POISED TO STRIKE AT THE EARTH!

AND, FROM THE LOOK OF IT--THE HUMAN TORCH IS ON THEIR SIDE!!

THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT, WONDER-STRUCK ONE: THREE WORLDS, EACH UNDER SUDDEN ATTACK FROM A SECOND--AND BRACED TO GO TO ALL-OUT WAR WITH STILL A THIRD!

HOW MANY WORLDS MUST DIE THIS DAY-- WITHOUT EVER KNOWING WHY??

MANUFACTURED BY INTER-POLITAN THERMO-DYNAMICS UNLIMITED

NEXT ISSUE:

THE THING RUNS AMOK-- IN DUPLICATE!

FANTASTIC FOUR

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

FANTASTIC FOUR®

THE SHOCKER YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE!

TWO THINGS ARE DEADLIER THAN ONE!

NOTHING MUST STOP US NOW! WE'RE COMING THRU!

OR ELSE THEY'LL CARRY US OUT--FEET FIRST!

BUCKLER/ SINNOTT

THEN THAT'S JUST WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO!

A brilliant scientist—— his best friend—— the woman he loves—— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR—— and the world will never again be the same!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME!

Courtesy of...

ROY THOMAS *writer/editor* * RICH BUCKLER *artist* * JOE SINNOTT *embellisher*

PHIL RACHE *colorist*
JOE ROSEN *letterer*

LET ME OUT OF HERE!!
HE'S BROKEN FREE OF OUR ELECTRONIC RESTRAINERS!
STOP HIM! HE MUST NOT ESCAPE!
LOOK, WE KNOW YOU CAN'T FOOL ALL OF THE PEOPLE ALL OF THE TIME, TRUE BELIEVER--

--SO WE WON'T EVEN **PRETEND** THAT THIS ISN'T THE **REED RICHARDS** OF AN **ALTERNATE EARTH**--

--THE REED RICHARDS WHO, IN **HIS** WORLD, WAS TURNED INTO A POWERFULLY-MUSCLED, BRICK-SKINNED **THING!** *

BUT, DID EVER OUR OWN **BEN GRIMM** EVER RAGE MORE **ANGRILY**--?

GET OUT OF MY **WAY**, ALL OF YOU--

* AS YE KNOW, WHO READ ISH * 160. --**ROY**.

--OR I WON'T BE **RESPONSIBLE** FOR WHAT HAPPENS TO--

BUT I **WILL**, MAN-THAT-IS-ALSO-**MONSTER**...

ARRRGH..!

ZZAZT!

--I, **ARKON**-- CALLED THE **MAGNIFICENT!!**

YOU BLUNDERING, INEFFECTUAL **OAFS!**

I TRUSTED YOU WITH ONE SIMPLE **TASK**-- AND, IF I'D NOT **RETURNED** PRECISELY WHEN I **DID**--

A- A THOUSAND **PARDONS**, LORD ARKON!

WE HAD **CORRECTLY** GAUGED HIS **STRENGTH**--

--BUT HAD GROSSLY **UNDER-ESTIMATED** HIS POTENTIAL **ADRENAL QUOTIENT!** HE--

ENOUGH! I WANT NO PUTRID **EXCUSES**--

--ONLY **RESULTS!**

NOW, **BIND** HIM ANEW WITH THE **ADAMANTIUM CHAINS** WHICH I HAVE OBTAINED!

NOT EVEN **HIS** FORMIDABLE STRENGTH CAN BURST FREE OF **THOSE.**

I THINK HE'LL OFFER US **LITTLE** TROUBLE HENCEFORWARD, SIRE.

THEN **SPEAK ON**, GREYBEARD...

...AND TELL ME HOW **PROGRESSES** MY PLAN FOR THE **DESTRUCTION OF THREE WORLDS!**

WELL, MILORD. AYE, VERY WELL INDEED!

AS YOUR MOST TRUSTED ADVISOR, I HAVE MONITORED THE THREE SPHERES IN QUESTION BY MEANS OF THIS 3D SCOPITRON IMAGE.

FOR INSTANCE: IN THE WORLD KNOWN POPULARLY AS THE FIFTH DIMENSION, THE SO-CALLED HUMAN TORCH HAS JOINED WITH PHINEAS' BLUE-SKINNED NATIVES FOR THE PURPOSE OF INVADING THE ALTERNATE-EARTH FROM WHICH OUR GROTESQUE CAPTIVE CAME.

THIS HE DOES, AS YOU WELL KNOW, BECAUSE DEADLY ANDROIDS -- CREATED BY THE "REED RICHARDS THING" -- ATTACKED THAT DIMENSION.

AND, ALL THE WHILE, PHINEAS' WORLD DOES NOT SUSPECT THAT THE SO-CALLED TRUE EARTH OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR PREPARES IN TURN TO ATTACK THEM!

THAT IS THE BEAUTY OF MY SUBTLE IF COMPLEX PLAN, GREYBEARD.

THREE WORLDS, EXISTING SIDE BY SIDE -- EACH ATTACKED BY ONE, AND THUS MOVED TO RETALIATE AGAINST IT --

-- WHILE WEAPONS DEVELOPED BY ITSELF ARE USED TO DEVASTATE STILL A THIRD!

SOON, EACH WORLD WILL BE AT THE THROAT OF THE OTHER TWO -- IN A TRUE WAR OF THE WORLDS!

SPECIAL ASIDE: OKAY, SO WE KNOW THAT THIS IS POSSIBLY THE MOST COMPLICATED PLOT-LINE SINCE "WAR AND PEACE." THUS, ROY AND RICH THOUGHT THE TWO CHARTS BELOW MIGHT HELP A BIT:

THIS CHART SHOWS HOW THE WEAPONS OF PHINEAS AND TWO REED RICHARDSES ARE BEING USED AGAINST ANOTHER WORLD.

HEAT-COLD WEAPONS OF PHINEAS USED TO SPUR NEW "ICE AGE" ON EARTH OF FANTASTIC FOUR

EARTH OF FANTASTIC FOUR

EARTH OF FIFTH DIMENSION

AS TO PRECISELY WHO'S USING THEM THAT WAY -- WELL, STICK AROUND.

DINOSAURS AND OTHER "TIME-MENACES" SUMMONED BY TIME-MACHINE OWNED BY REED RICHARDS OF F.F., USED TO INVADE ALTERNATE-EARTH

EARTH-A (ALTERNATE EARTH)

"ANDRONES" (ROBOTS) DEVISED BY REED RICHARDS (A.K.A. "THE THING") USED TO ATTACK FIFTH DIMENSION

THIS CHART, IN TURN, REVEALS HOW THE RETALIATORY FORCES OF THE ATTACKED WORLD PREPARE TO FIGHT BACK.

EARTH FORCES PREPARE TO ASSAULT FIFTH DIMENSION (IF THEY CAN FIGURE A WAY TO GET THERE.)

EARTH OF FIFTH DIMENSION

EARTH OF FANTASTIC FOUR

GOT IT? WE HOPE SO -- 'CAUSE THERE'LL BE A POP QUIZ WHEN THE WHOLE MAGILLA'S TIED UP.

5D ARMY SET TO INVADE ALTERNATE-EARTH

ALTERNATE-EARTH ANDRONE ARMY POISED TO ATTACK EARTH OF FANTASTIC FOUR

EARTH-A (ALTERNATE EARTH)

OKAY -- NOW YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN --!

MEANWHILE, OF COURSE, WE HAVE RE-LOCATED OUR AWESOME ANDRONE ARMY--

--SO THAT IT IS NOW ATTACKING THE SO-CALLED TRUE EARTH--THE HOME-WORLD OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

DANGER

"...WHILE THE MAJOR ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES...

"...(THE UNITED STATES BEING, IN CASE MILORD HAS FORGOTTEN, ONE OF THE PRIMARY INDUSTRIAL NATIONS OF THAT EARTH)...

"...ARE PREPARING TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH AGAINST THE FIFTH-DIMENSIONAL WORLD THEY HOLD RESPONSIBLE FOR A NEW ICE AGE!

IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN, ARKON --YOU MUST STOP THIS INSANITY! YOU--

SILENCE, RICHARDS! WHO ARE YOU TO LECTURE THE ALMIGHTY IMPERION?

I BOUGHT YOU, JUST AS I BOUGHT PHINEAS FIRST--

--THEN THE OTHER REED RICHARDS!

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT, SO FAR, THEY DO NOT KNOW FULLY THE USE TO WHICH I'VE PUT THEIR TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE--

AND SO, THEY HAVE STAYED BOUGHT!

YOU WOULD HAVE DONE WELL TO DO THE SAME.

THINK ON THAT A WHILE...!

SSIZZZZ

SSSZZZZZRAR!

"THE ANDRONES ARE FIRST DESTROYING PRECIOUS ENERGY PLANTS, TO SOFTEN THAT SPHERE UP FOR FULL-SCALE INVASION...

"PERHAPS STRANGEST OF ALL, HOWEVER, IS THE SITUATION ON ALTERNATE EARTH ITSELF-- AS SOLDIERS FROM EVERY ERA POUR FORTH FROM A TIME MACHINE FIRST INVENTED BY A MADMAN NAMED DR. DOOM, THEN LATER PERFECTED BY REED RICHARDS.

"HUNS OF EVERY STRIPE--ROMAN LEGIONNAIRES --EVEN PRIMITIVE SAVAGES--ALL CAUSE PANIC IN THE STREETS OF THAT WORLD'S VERSION OF NEW YORK CITY!"

BUT, AS FOOTSTEPS RECEDE DOWN THE CORRIDOR, OTHER THINGS ARE ON THE MIND OF THE BRUTISH MAN OF SCIENCE:

FOR INSTANCE, THE CRYSTAL SCOPITRON DEVICE STILL FLOATS BEFORE HIM--

AND FROM SOMEWHERE DEEP WITHIN, THE TINIEST FLICKERING OF LIGHT AND ENERGY IS STILL VISIBLE.

PERHAPS--JUST PERHAPS, MIND YOU--ARKON THE MAGNIFICENT HAS MADE HIS FIRST MISTAKE.

BUT, EVEN IF HE HAS--

--CAN A HEAVILY-SEDATED HUMAN MONSTER TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF IT--?

WHILE, BOTH A **HEARTBEAT** AND A **UNIVERSE** AWAY...

HOW'S IT **GOING**, REED DARLING?

NOT TOO **WELL**, HONEY...

BUT THEN, HAVING **ONE AFTERNOON** TO WHIP UP A DEVICE TO **DEFROST** AN ENTIRE RAMPAGING **GLACIER** ISN'T EXACTLY MY IDEA OF **CHILD'S PLAY.** I--

KRASH

WHAT WAS **THAT??**

REED-- **WHO--??**

FRAAK!

THERE'S NO **SIMPLE** ANSWER TO THAT ONE, SUE.

A **CAVEMAN**-- A GREEK **HOPLITE**-- AND I THINK I SEE AN **INDIAN** WITH A **TOMAHAWK** BACK THERE, TOO!

WE'RE BEING **ATTACKED**-- BY WHAT LOOKS LIKE THE **CAST-CALL** FROM **"THE STORY OF MANKIND"!**

THEY MUST HAVE COME FROM YOUR **TIME MACHINE!**

BUT, I GAVE IT TO **DEVOOR**, AS PART OF OUR **DEAL** WITH HIM!

WOMP!

OBVIOUSLY, THEY GOT PAST **SECURITY** DOWN-STAIRS BECAUSE OF THE SUDDEN **BLACKOUT**--

PKOW!

BUT THEY'LL SOON FIND OUT THAT, IN ADDITION TO HAVING OUR OWN **GENERATORS**--

SLAM!

--THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** HAVE **OTHER** POWER SOURCES!

FTOM!

WELL, *MISTER* FANTASTIC-- YOU POLISHED THEM OFF SO *FAST* I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO TURN *INVISIBLE* AND HELP!

WHAT *MATTERS* IS--ONLY *DEVOOR* HIMSELF COULD HAVE SENT THOSE GOONS AFTER US!

YOUR *ARM*, REED. WHAT'S *WRONG*?

JUST A LITTLE *STIFFNESS*, HONEY. I'LL--

ARRRGH!

REED--?

IT'S-- MY *HEAD!* SUDDENLY-- IT FEELS-- LIKE IT'S *SPLITTING!*

--AS IF-- *SOMEONE ELSE*-- WERE INSIDE MY *SKULL*--!

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, RICHARDS..!

THERE IS...

...AND IT'S... YOURSELF!

NOW, EVEN *I* CAN SEE THE IMAGE! BUT *WHO*--?

IT MUST BE-- IT *IS*-- THAT *OTHER* "THING"--

--THE ONE *ALICIA* ENCOUNTERED ON THE *STREET* YESTERDAY--*

--BEFORE HE WAS *CAPTURED* BY THE ALIEN WARRIOR CALLED *ARKON!*

*OR, MORE PRECISELY, IN *F.F.* #160. --ROY.

IF YOU KNOW *THAT* MUCH, THEN YOU'LL BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT *THIS*, AS WELL:

I AM THE *REED RICHARDS* OF AN *ALTERNATE EARTH*--

--AN EARTH WHERE *I*, *NOT* BEN GRIMM, WAS TURNED BY COSMIC RAYS INTO A *HIDEOUS GARGOYLE!*

AMAZING AS IT SOUNDS-- I *DO* BELIEVE YOU!

REED-- DIDN'T *OUR* BEN *HINT* AT SOME SUCH THING ONCE-- WHEN HE RETURNED FROM A TRIP INTO *ANOTHER DIMENSION*?*

YOU'RE *RIGHT*, SUE. IT ALL *FITS!*

THEN LET ME *CONTINUE*-- FOR MY TIME MAY BE *SHORT*--!

*AFTER ISH #118.--ROY.

"LIKE YOURSELF, I'M A **SCIENTIST**... AND I'VE CONTINUED MY RESEARCHES, EVEN SINCE MY... **ACCIDENT.**

"MY SPECIAL FIELD IS **ROBOTICS**--THE BUILDING OF ROBOTS AND ANDROIDS OF EVERY **SIZE**, EVERY **SHAPE**, EVERY **USE.**

"WHAT **ELSE** CAN ONE DO-- WHEN ONE IS TOO **MONSTROUS**, TOO **MISSHAPEN** TO WALK AMONG ONE'S FELLOW MEN?

"NOT LONG AGO, A MAN CALLED **DeVOOR** CAME TO ME, REPRESENTING A LARGE CORPORATION CALLED **INTER-RELATED TECHNOCRACIES**--**I.T.** FOR SHORT-- WISHING TO **BUY** MY ONE-MAN OPERATION.

"NEEDING **CASH** TO CONTINUE MY WORK, I FOOLISHLY **ACCEPTED.**

"**ANOTHER** WHO ACCEPTED, BEFORE THE INTERIM OF **XEMU'S** RULE, WAS **PHINEAS** --MAJOR SCIENTIST OF THE **FIFTH DIMENSION.**

"IN **HIS** SPHERE, THE CORPORATION IS CALLED **INTER-POLITAN THERMO-DYNAMICS!**

"PHINEAS SPECIALIZES IN **TEMPERATURE DEVICES**...

"...WHICH WERE WHAT **DeVOOR** WAS AFTER, OF COURSE!"

WAIT A MINUTE! THEN, THE DeVOOR WHO REPRESENTS **INTERLOCKING TECHNOCRACIES**-- THE MAN WHO **BOUGHT OUT** FANTASTIC FOUR, INC.-- **ISN'T** REALLY OF EARTH AT **ALL!**

HARDLY! HE'S A PAID AGENT OF **ARKON**, IMPERION OF STILL A **FOURTH** CONTINUUM...

... AND **ARKON'S** AIM IS TO **DESTROY** THE FIRST THREE WORLDS-- WITH **EACH OTHER'S WEAPONS!**

DON'T I **KNOW** IT!

BUT-- WHAT ABOUT **YOU**, UH-- **RICHARDS?** ARE YOU-- **ALL RIGHT?**

REED! THAT SQUARES WITH WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM THE **AVENGERS RECORDS**...!

I'M ARKON'S CAPTIVE! NO WILL POWER-- TO BREAK FREE!

BUT-- YOU'RE ME! SO MAYBE--

YES! IT'S WORTH A TRY!

PERHAPS-- BEING THE SAME MAN, IN A WAY-- WE CAN COMBINE WILLS--!

YOU'RE RIGHT! I FEEL-- STRONGER NOW--

--MUCH STRONGER!

FR--

--K!

FREE! BUT, THE CONTACT IS BROKEN. WE JOINED WILLS NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.

NOW-- I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO!

I ONLY HOPE I'M POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DO IT--

--ALONE!

ONLY MINUTES LATER, IN OUR WORLD, A DARK-GLOVED HAND REACHES FOR A DOOR-KNOB...

...AND GRASPS, PERHAPS, THE FATE OF MANY WORLDS!

INTERLOCKING TECHNOLOGIES, UNLIMITED

PRIVATE

READY, SUE?

READY, REED!

DeVOOR-- IT'S TIME WE HAD A LITTLE TALK!

YOU! HOW DID YOU GET PAST--?

I MEAN-- HOW PLEASANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MR. AND MRS. RICKARDS. WHY, I WAS JUST--

SAVE IT! JUST TELL US ABOUT ARKON!

WHAM!

WHO? I DON'T BELIEVE I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE--

WHO?

I WANT THE FACTS, DeVOOR... THE FACTS ABOUT ARKON!

ASK THAT AGAIN--

--AND YOU'LL DO IT WITHOUT TEETH!

STOP! I-I'LL TALK!!

THEN START! AND DON'T EXPECT YOUR LACKEYS TO COME RUSHING TO YOUR RESCUE. WE'VE ALREADY DISPOSED OF THEM.

TELL US ABOUT ARKON-- THE DETAILS OF HIS LITTLE SCHEME-- AND FAST!

Y-YES-- BUT P-PLEASE --DON'T STRIKE ME--

I CAN'T STAND P-PAIN...!

MEANWHILE, THE USUAL HEARTBEAT AWAY...

HALT! GO BACK TO YOUR CELL, RICHARDS-- OR YOU'LL FORCE US TO FIRE!

MAXIMUM SECURITY

ARKON MUST HAVE COUNTED A LITTLE TOO HEAVILY ON THOSE CHAINS OF HIS, MY FRIENDS...

...OR ELSE HE'D AT LEAST HAVE GIVEN YOU LECTURE 101:

THAM!

"SUBJECT: THE CUBING EFFECT OF COSMIC RAYS UPON THE PHYSICAL PROWESS OF CERTAIN HUMAN BEINGS."

BUT-- HOLY HANNAH! I'M NOT IN ARKON'S WORLD, AS I'D THOUGHT.

THAT'S MY OWN WORLD OUT THERE!

I WAS HELD PRISONER-- IN THE HEART ON NEW YORK CITY!

HMMM... LOOKS AS IF I GOT MY PICTURE IN THE MORNING TABLOID!

BUT, WHY WOULD ARKON--?

DAILY MIRR

REED RICHA LOOK ALIKE

WRONG! THIS ISN'T ME!

IT'S THE BEN GRIMM OF THE OTHER EARTH!

DAILY MIRR

REED RICHA LOOK ALIKE

IT SAYS HERE THAT BONA FIDE TROOPS ARE HOLDING HIM-- JUST A FEW SHORT BLOCKS FROM HERE!!

THUS, FASTER THAN YOU CAN SAY, "AN UNLIKELY COINCIDENCE"...

OBVIOUSLY, THE GOVERNMENT THINKS GRIMM'S IN LEAGUE WITH ONE OF THE INVASION FORCES.

ORDINARILY, I'D GO GET A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS...

--BUT, TODAY ISN'T EXACTLY YOUR ORDINARY DAY!!

WH-WHO IN BLAZES IS THAT?

IT'S-- THE SAME MONSTER WE'RE GUARDING! WHO ELSE HAS A FIST THAT SIZE??

K-RRAAK!

BUT-- HE'S ALL DRUGGED UP INSIDE!!

DON'T *WORRY*, BOYS. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND *EVERYTHING*...

...WHEN YOU READ MY NEXT ARTICLE IN THE *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN!*

KLUNK!

GRIMM! *BEN GRIMM--!*

YEAH? WHATCHA *WANT?*

YOU COME BACK TA LOOK AT THE *FREAK--?*

BEN-- *LOOK* AT ME!

OKAY, SO I'M *LOOKIN.'* SO WHAT'S THE BIG-- *HOLY COW!* YOU'RE-- *ME!!*

NOW IT'S ALL COMIN' *BACK* TA ME! YER THE *REED RICHARDS* OF THIS WORLD-- THE ONE I MET *BEFORE,* RIGHT?

CHECK...!

NOW, WE'D BETTER GET *OUT* OF HERE-- *FAST!*

I CAN'T EXPECT MY *OWN* ESCAPE TO GO *UNDETECTED* FOR LONG. WE CAN GET OUT THE WAY I *CAME.*

THERE'S AN *ALLEY* OUT BACK--!

NOPE! I 'PRECIATE YER *RESCUIN'* ME AN' ALL-- BUT I CLOBBERED A *DINOSAUR* A WHILE BACK-- SAVED THE WHOLE BLAMED *CITY*--

AN' ALL THEY DID WAS *GROG ME UP,* AND THROW ME IN A *CELL.*

OH, I'M GETTIN' *OUTTA* HERE, ALL RIGHT--

--BUT *NOT* THRU NO *BACK DOOR!*

OR, AS MY OL' *AUNT PETUNIA* USETA SAY, ON *ALTERNATE DAYS*--

GERONIMO!

SMASH!

UH OH. DON'T LOOK NOW, REED SWEETIE...

...BUT THERE'S A RECEPTION COMMITTEE OUTSIDE!

HEY! I KNOW THE GUY WHO'S LEADIN' IT! HE'S--

THIS IS GENERAL T.E.ROSS--U.S.A.F.-- TALKING TO YOU, BOY!

GET BACK INSIDE THERE--

--YOU INHUMAN HULK!!

"HULK"!? BOY, HAVE YOU GOT THE WRONG MAN-MONSTER, T-BOLT!

CALL OFF YER DOGS-- WE'RE COMIN' THRU!

HEY! WHAT IN BLAZES--? THERE'S TWO OF 'EM!

NO--WAIT, BEN! WE'VE GOT TO TRY TO REASON WITH THEM FIRST.

IF THEY START FIRING, RICOCHETING BULLETS MAY HURT SOMEONE!

GENERAL ROSS! I'M THE REAL REED RICHARDS--!

LISTEN TO ME--I WAS BEING HELD CAPTIVE ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY, UNKNOWN EVEN TO YOU.

THERE'S NO NEED FOR VIOLENCE, IF YOU'LL JUST LET ME EXPLAIN!

SHUT UP, RICHARDS! YOU SOUND JUST LIKE BRUCE BANNER, MY MILKSOP SON-IN-LAW!

Y'SEE HOW IT IS, REED? I VOTE WE CLOBBER 'EM!

NOT YET-- NOT UNLESS THEY TRY TO STOP US.

GENERAL-- THERE ARE FORCES AT WORK, TRYING TO GET THREE WORLDS TO GO TO WAR WITH EACH OTHER-- DESTROY EACH OTHER WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS--!

SURE-- AND I'M SGT. YORK!

NOW, REED-BABY?

IN A *WORD*, BEN: *NOW!*

HARRUMPH! IT'S PROBABLY ALL DONE WITH *MIRRORS*. I'M GOING TO *PERSONALLY*--

KEEP BACK! I DON'T WANT TO *HURT* YOU.

I *KNEW* IT. THEY'RE BOTH *YELLOW!*

ALL RIGHT, ROSS. YOU LEAVE ME *NO CHOICE* BUT TO--

WH--? *BEN!*

OF *COURSE* I'M BEN! I'M STANDIN' RIGHT *NEXT* TO YA, AIN'T I?

HE MEANS *ME*, THING! YOU'RE NOT THE *ONLY* BEN GRIMM IN THIS WORLD, REMEMBER!

HOW COULD I *FERGIT* IT?! WHADDA *YOU* WANT?

IT'S NOT WHAT I *WANT*. IT'S WHAT I *SEE*.

LOOK!

CRIPES! IT'S THE *TORCH*-- LEADIN' A WHOLE ARMY OF *BLUE-SKINNED GUYS* THRU SOME KIND'A *HOLE IN SPACE!*

HUH? *TWO* THINGS!? I DIDN'T KNOW THIS DIMENSION EVEN HAD *ONE*.

WELL, OUT OF OUR *WAY*, BOTH OF YOU! WE'RE *COMING THRU!*

ARE YOU SURE HE'S NOT A *BLOOD-RELATIVE* OF YOURS, GRIMM?

VER-RY FUNNY!

STAY BACK, LAD! THERE'S *NO NEED*--

I'M BETTING YOU'RE *BOTH* FAKES-- AND HERE'S WHERE I *PROVE* IT!

THAT *HOTHEAD* WON'T PAY YA NO *HEED*, RICHARDS...

THERE'S ONLY *ONE* THING THAT KID UNNERSTANDS--

AN' OL' *BENJY'S* GONNA *GIVE* IT TO 'IM--

--BEFORE SOMEBODY ELSE DOES!!

YOU *TALK* LIKE BEN-- BUT WHO'S THAT *OTHER* LUMP OF CLAY?

AND WHAT'RE YOU DOING IN *THIS* VERSION OF EARTH?

NOPE! UNDER THE *CIRCUMSTANCES*--

--I'VE GOT TO TREAT YOU *BOTH* LIKE *ENEMIES!*

YOU FLAMIN' *J.D.!* I'LL PUTCHA OVER MY *KNEE* AN'--

YEEEOWW!

FO SH!

GRIMM!!

HEY! WHAT--??

NOW YOU'VE *DONE* IT, SON!

WATCHIT, BIG-BRAIN! THAT'S--

I *KNOW* WHO IT IS, BEN.

HE'S *YOUR WORLD'S* VERSION OF SUE GRIMM'S BROTHER *JOHNNY!*

I *OUGHT* TO KNOW. I ATTENDED HIS FUNERAL IN *THIS* WORLD-- WHEN HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN *NAM!*

AND JUST *WHO* IN BLAZES ARE *YOU*?

THE NAME'S *REED RICHARDS!*

HUH??

TRUST 'IM, SQUIRT! OUR *THREE WORLDS* BEEN TRICKED INTA *FIGHTIN'* EACH OTHER-- BY THAT CREEP *ARKON!*

STAND ASIDE, YOU THREE! THIS IS *WAR,* AND--

NO-- WAIT--!

LOOK, **YOU** KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, DON'T YOU: HOT-TEMPERED **JOHNNY STORM** HAVING SEEN THE LIGHT-- AND SINCE EVEN **THUNDERBOLT ROSS** DOESN'T CARE TO DO BATTLE WHEN THERE'S NO NEED-- AN **UNEASY TRUCE** IS QUICKLY DECLARED, LIKE **SO**--

AS *ACTING COMMANDER,* APPOINTED BY *PHINEAS,* I COMMAND YOU--

--*RETURN* TO THE FIFTH DIMENSION, WHILE I INVESTIGATE THE *TRUTH* OR *FALSEHOOD* OF WHAT THESE TWO HAVE TOLD ME!

I GOTTA *HAND* IT TO YA, KID. YOU CAN TALK AS SQUARE AS *OUR* REED, WHEN YOU GOTTA!

YES-- WE ARE *GOING,* HUMAN TORCH--

BUT, WE'LL BE ***WATCHING*** THIS WORLD-- AND ***YOU***--

AND, AT THE FIRST SIGN OF ***TREACHERY,*** FROM ***ANYONE,*** WE'LL ATTACK ANEW WITH ALL THE ***ADVANCED WEAPONRY*** AT OUR DISPOSAL!

IT'S ***MY*** FAULT THEIR HOMES WERE LAID WASTE BY ***ANDRONES,*** GRIMM.

A FINE GAGGLE'A ***BLUE MEANIES*** YOU GOT THERE, MATCH-HEAD!

I ***DESIGNED*** THOSE ANDROIDS ESPECIALLY FOR ***I. T.!***

ALL RIGHT-- I'VE STOOD ABOUT ALL THE SHENANIGANS I ***CAN*** FROM YOU THREE.

YOU'RE COMING ALONG FOR ***QUESTIONING,*** RIGHT ***NOW!***

QUESTIONING!? WHY, ***YOU***--

LET ***ME*** HANDLE THIS, BLUE-EYES.

FLAME ON!

WHAT WE ***NEED*** IS TIME TO ***THINK***--

--SO I'LL ***GIVE*** US THAT TIME, WITH A ***FLAMING BARRIER***--

--WHICH'D ***ROAST*** EVEN A MAN IN AN ***ASBESTOS ZOOT-SUIT!***

ZAASH!

A-OK! NOW, LET'S ***POW-WOW*** FAST, AND SEE WHAT WE CAN--

UH OH! ***HEADS UP,*** CREW!

LOOKS LIKE ***EVERY***BODY WANTS TA GET INTA THE ACT!

HOLY SMOKE! IT'S-- THE REAL REED!

"REAL" IS A RELATIVE TERM, JOHNNY STORM-- BUT, I'LL LET THAT PASS.

AH, RICHARDS-- I SEE YOU'VE CAUGHT MR. DeVOOR, THE MAN WHO "BOUGHT" BOTH US-- AND PHINEAS!

YES-- AND, WITH A MINIMAL AMOUNT OF FRIENDLY PERSUASION, I'VE PERSUADED HIM TO TALK ABOUT THE TRUE POWER BEHIND ALL THREE "I.T." GROUPS-- ARKON!

IF ARKON CAN PRODUCE NUCLEAR WARS ON OUR THREE WORLDS SIMULTANEOUSLY-- HE'LL PRODUCE ENOUGH ATOMIC POWER TO RUN HIS OWN WORLD FOR MILLENNIA!

THE AVENGERS STOPPED HIM COLD ONCE BEFORE; NOW, IT'S OUR TURN!

DeVOOR TOLD ME OF A SWIRLING NEXUS-- EQUIDISTANT FROM ALL THREE DIMENSIONS-- PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN TO US.

GLACIERS

EARTH "5D"

"EARTH"

NEXUS

TIME DISPLACE-MENT

ANDRONES

"ALTERNATE EARTH"

IT IS THRU THIS NEXUS-- THIS HOLE IN TIME AND SPACE-- THAT THE POWER WOULD REACH ARKON'S WORLD!

WE MUST DESTROY THAT NEXUS-- SO THAT ARKON NEVER AGAIN HAS THE OPTION OF SAVING HIS WORLD BY DESTROYING OURS!

THESE SKATE-LIKE DEVICES OF DeVOOR'S--

--WILL ENABLE YOU TO TRAVEL INTER-DIMENSIONALLY --TO REACH THE NEXUS!

YOU WANT US ALL THREE TO HIGHTAIL IT THERE?

NO! FROM WHAT I'VE LEARNED, THAT APPROACH WOULD LEAD TO SHEER DISASTER! *

THE OTHER TWO MUST GO TO ARKON'S SPHERE-- ATTACK HIM ON HIS HOME GROUND, IN CASE THE OTHER ASSAULT FAILS.

WELL, WHAT THE HEY, EGGHEAD!

WE GOTTA GO SOME-WHERE, RIGHT?

THE NATIVES HERE ARE GETTIN' A MITE RESTLESS!

* AND NEXT ISH, WE'LL EVEN TELL YOU WHY! --ROY.

THEN WHAT ARE YOU ALL *WAITING* FOR? *DeVOOR* SHOWED ME HOW TO LET YOU *DIMENSION-HOP* WITH THE *BEST* OF THEM.

NOW GET *GOING*, AND *BRING HOME THE BACON!*

Y'KNOW SOMETHING, REED? ON *ANY* WORLD, YOU'RE STILL THE *BIGGEST SQUARE* I EVER *MET.*

THEN *YOU AND I* WILL HAVE TO HAVE A NICE LONG *HEART-TO-HEART* SOME-TIME, JOHNNY...

...BUT OBVIOUSLY NOT *NOW!*

FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS, WE'VE ARRIVED IN *ARKON'S WORLD.*

EITHER THAT OR A SUBURB OF *DISNEY-LAND!*

YOU BEEN HERE *BEFORE?*

NO, BUT *DeVOOR* SHOWED ME GLIMPSES OF IT, AFTER *ARKON* TOOK ME *PRISONER.*

WELL, AS *BEN GRIMM* WOULD SAY-- WE'D BETTER *GET CRACKING.*

RIGHT. THAT *TRUCE* WE PATCHED TOGETHER ISN'T GOING TO LAST *FOREVER.*

WONDER HOW *BEN'S* DOING LOOKING FOR THAT *NEXUS* IN *HYPER-SPACE...!*

*AND, JUST IN CASE **YOU'VE** BEEN WONDERING THE SAME THING FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF PANELS ...*

YEESH!

THIS PLACE IS EVEN CREEPIER'N THE *NEGATIVE ZONE!*

I AIN'T TOO HOT ON THESE *SKATE-THINGS* O' REED'S-- BUT, IF I CAN JUST REMEMBER MY OL' DAYS AT THE *ROCKE-FELLER CENTER ICE-RINK,* MAYBE I CAN--

HEY! THAT *SOLID BLACK* AREA I'M COMIN' TO-- THAT MUST BE THE *WHATSIS--* THE *NEXUS--*

*-- BUT **WHO** IN BLAZES IS THAT IN **FRONT** OF IT??*

FOOL THAT YOU ARE! DID YOU THINK THE MIGHTY ARKON WOULD LEAVE THE ALL-IMPORTANT NEXUS UNPROTECTED?

I AM GAARD! AND, YOU NEED KNOW NO MORE--

--SINCE, IN A FEW MERE MILLI-SECONDS, YOU SHALL BE DEAD!!

HOLY CROW! HERE I CAN BARELY STAND UP--

--AN' THAT GUY'S ZIPPIN' AROUND LIKE HE WUZ BORN ON THEM SKATE-GIZMOS!

SONJA HENIE-- WHERE ARE YOU NOW THAT I NEED YOU??

NEXT THE FINAL FREE-FOR-ALL!

(YEAH, WE KNOW THAT'S NOT TOO MELO-DRAMATIC-- BUT TAKE IT FROM US, YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR KID GLOVES AT HOME!)

FANTASTIC FOUR

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FANTASTIC FOUR

THIS IS IT! SUDDEN-DEATH SHOWDOWN WITH—

GAARD!

HE PLAYS THE DEADLIEST GAME OF ALL!

A brilliant scientist—— his best friend—— the woman he loves—— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

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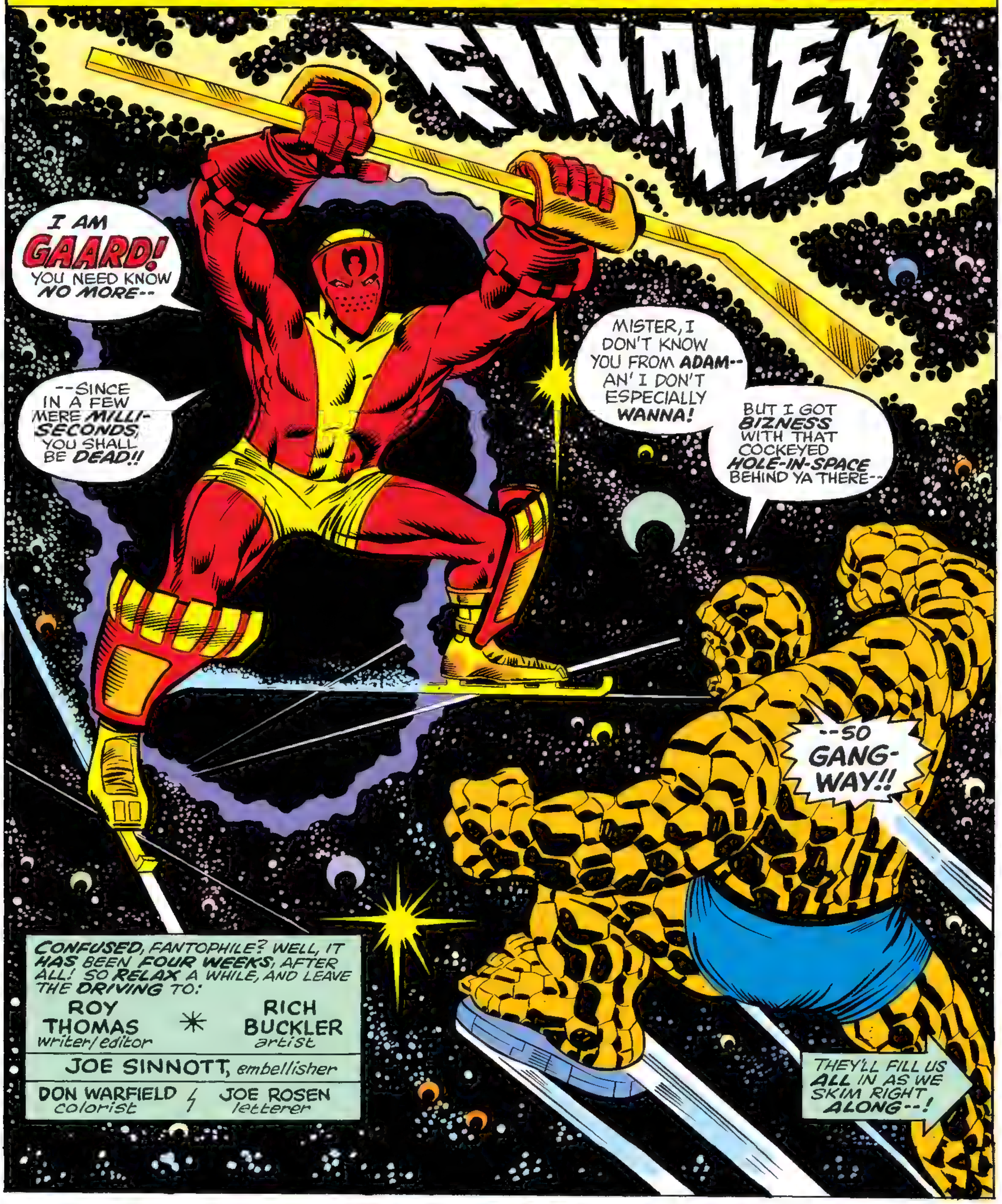

I AM GAARD! YOU NEED KNOW NO MORE--
--SINCE IN A FEW MERE MILLI-SECONDS, YOU SHALL BE DEAD!!
MISTER, I DON'T KNOW YOU FROM ADAM-- AN' I DON'T ESPECIALLY WANNA!
BUT I GOT BIZNESS WITH THAT COCKEYED HOLE-IN-SPACE BEHIND YA THERE--
--SO GANG-WAY!!
THEY'LL FILL US ALL IN AS WE SKIM RIGHT ALONG--!

CONFUSED, FANTOPHILE? WELL, IT HAS BEEN FOUR WEEKS, AFTER ALL! SO RELAX A WHILE, AND LEAVE THE DRIVING TO:

ROY THOMAS *writer/editor* ✳ RICH BUCKLER *artist*

JOE SINNOTT, *embellisher*

DON WARFIELD *colorist* ϟ JOE ROSEN *letterer*

MEBBE I *CAN'T* SKATE AS GOOD AS YOU--

BUT NUTHIN'S GONNA *STOP* ME!

UNNNH!

AN' THEN AGAIN--

FZZAKK!

--MEBBE IT *WILL!*

FOOL AMONG *FOOLS!*

DID YOU TRULY IMAGINE THAT *ARKON THE MAGNIFICENT* WOULD LEAVE HIS ALL-IMPORTANT *UNIVERSAL NEXUS* UNPROTECTED?

ON THE *CONTRARY*-- I WAS *CREATED* TO DEFEND IT, TO *MY* DEATH-- OR *YOURS.*

I *PREFER* IT BE YOURS!

WOTTA REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT *THIS* IS!

HE SCOOTS ALONG LIKE HE WUZ *BORN* ON THEM SKATE-GIZMOS--

AN' *ME*-- I CAN HARDLY *STAND UP!*

MATTER'A FACT, I'D PROB'LY FALL FLAT ON MY *TUSH*-- IF THERE WUZ SOMEPLACE TA FALL *TO!*

UH OH! HERE HE COMES *AGAIN!*

THE HECK WITH *SONJA HENIE*-- IT'D TAKE THE *SILVER SURFER* TA GET ME OUTTA *THIS!*

BUT, MY JOB'S TO GET THIS *GADGET* ON MY CHEST THRU THAT BLACK HOLE THEY CALL THE *NEXUS*--

AN' LIKE THEY SAY-- MINE AIN'T TA REASON *WHY.*

I JUST GOTTA *DO*--

--OR DIE!

ZZASK

OR, AT THE RATE I'M GOIN'-- MAYBE BOTH!

WELL, LOOKS LIKE TIME FOR MY ALTERNATE GAME-PLAN!

I CAN'T GET NEAR HIM, LONG AS HE'S GOT THAT WIRED-FOR-SOUND HOCKEY STICK...

SO, I GOTTA GET BACK TO BASICS.

THE MAIN THING, REED SAID, IS TA GET INSIDE THAT SPACE-HOLE AN' BLOW IT UP--

--SO'S IT CAN'T FUNNEL ATOMIC -POWER TO ARKON'S WORLD.

I AIN'T TOO CLEAR ON THE DETAILS-- BUT I ALWAYS WUZ A BIGGER MAN WITH A FRISBEE THAN I WUZ WITH A HOCKEY PUCK.

OKAY-- GANGWAY, CREEP--

--'CAUSE HERE COMES MY FAST BALL!

FAP!

IF SUCH LACKLUSTER VELOCITY IS CONSIDERED SPEED IN YOUR WORLD, MONSTER...

...THEN MY MOST DIFFICULT TASK WILL BE TO STEM THE TEPID TIDES OF BOREDOM!

RETURN THIS TO YOUR MISERABLE MASTERS, WHOEVER THEY MAY BE-- AND BID THEM SAVE THEIR TIME AND ENERGY--

--TILL THEY CAN SEND AGAINST ME ONE WHO, LIKE MYSELF, CAN SKIM THE LIGHT-RAYS WHICH STREAK TO AND FRO HERE IN HYPER-SPACE!

IN SHORT, MONSTER--

FF'P!

--BEGONE!

WOK!

OOOOFF!

CRIPES! THAT DIDN'T-- DO MY BREAD-BASKET ANY GOOD!

FUNNY, THOUGH-- I KEEP THINKIN'--

IT'S LIKE I'VE HEARD THAT BOZO'S VOICE BEFORE!

CAN'T TELL MUCH, THOUGH-- THRU THAT MASK--!

WELL THEN, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO--

I'M GONNA RIP IT OFF 'IM!!

SO, YOU SPURN MY GENEROUS ADVICE, IN FAVOR OF SHEER BRAVADO!

I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED NO LESS.

BUT, THOUGH SOME TRAITOR MAY HAVE SUPPLIED YOU WITH ANTI-GRAVITY SOLES, TO PROPEL YOU THRU HYPER-SPACE...

...THERE IS ONE THING HE COULD NOT HAVE GIVEN YOU:

--THE SHEER, ELECTRON-RELEASING POWER OF MY COSMIC SCEPTRE!

FZZZSK

ARRGH!

NOW, FLOAT THERE, GARGOYLE-- A LIFE-LESS MONUMENT FOR ALL TIME TO THE POWER OF ARKON--

--AND OF GAARD, HE WHO STANDS WATCH BEFORE THE ETERNAL NEXUS!

YA SPOKE-- TOO SOON, CREEPO! I'M ALIVE-- JUST BARELY!

ONE THING YER RIGHT ABOUT, THOUGH-- GOTTA FACE FACTS--

I'VE HAD IT!

IT'S LIKE-- SOME STUMBLE-BUM FROM THE HOCKEY MINORS TRYIN' TA GET PAST BERNIE PARENT!

I MIGHT AS WELL HANG IT UP...!

NO, BEN! YOU CAN'T! YOU DON'T DARE--!

NOT TILL YOU REMEMBER WHAT'S AT STAKE!

HUH? WHO'ZAT? GET OUTTA MY MIND!!

REED! I MIGHT'A KNOWN!

CAN ONLY TRANSMIT --FOR A MOMENT--

SO REMEMBER, BEN-- THREE WORLDS!

YEAH. I KNOW...

LONG AS THAT BLACK HOLE EXISTS OVER THERE--

--ARKON'S GOT A STAKE IN GETTIN' OUR THREE EARTHS TA BLOW EACH OTHER UP!

IF IT DON'T EXIST-- THEN IT'S A BRAND NEW BALL GAME!

SO BETTER WARM UP THAT JOYSTICK OF YERS AGAIN, GOALIE-BABY...

...'CAUSE I'M GONNA WIN THIS ONE FOR THE GIPPER...

...HIM, AN MAYBE NINE BILLION OTHER GUYS!

OH, REED-- DO YOU THINK HE REALLY CAN??

BUT HE'S NOT ON EARTH NOW-- HE'S IN SOME SORT OF DIMENSIONAL HYPER-SPACE, FACING A FOE SPECIALLY TRAINED TO FUNCTION THERE!

FRANKLY, SUE-- I DON'T!

BEN'S STRONG--MORE POWERFUL THAN NEARLY ANY OTHER CREATURE ON THE FACE OF THIS EARTH--

BUT, SO HELP ME, DeVOOR-- IF YOU WERE LYING WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT ONLY GAARD AND ONE OTHER LIVING SOUL COULD INHABIT THAT SECTOR OF HYPER-SPACE AT ONE TIME--!

I-I WASN'T LYING! I SWEAR IT!

ARKON DEVISED IT THAT WAY--

--BECAUSE IT AMUSED HIM TO IMAGINE SOME WORLD'S CHAMPION HAVING TO FACE GAARD ALONE-- ALONE, AND HOPELESSLY OUT-MATCHED!

WELL, YOU'D BETTER HOPE BEN DOES SUCCEED, DeVOOR...

...FOR YOUR OWN SAKE!

"IT'S YOUR FAULT THE HUMAN TORCH JOINED THE FORCES OF THE FIFTH DIMENSION...

"...LED THEM AGAINST AN ALTERNATE EARTH ON WHICH THE THING IS ACTUALLY... REED RICHARDS;

"YOUR FAULT THAT THAT REED'S DEADLY ANDRONES WERE USED TO INVADE SD IN THE FIRST PLACE;

"YOUR FAULT THAT BOTH VERSIONS OF THE THING WERE NEARLY KILLED ON THAT OTHER EARTH--

"...BY THE U.S. MILITARY!

AND, IF TWO EARTHS AND THE FIFTH DIMENSION GO UP IN A MUSHROOM CLOUD--YOU'LL PAY FOR IT BEFORE THEY GO! THAT I SWEAR!

P-PLEASE-- IT WASN'T MY FAULT!

IT'S ARKON YOU REALLY WANT--!

"I WAS ALWAYS A *FAILURE*-- AS A SCIENTIST *AND* IN BUSINESS-- I WAS EVEN ON THE VERGE OF *SUICIDE*...

"...WHEN *ARKON* CAME TO ME-- AS IF FROM *NOWHERE!*

"*I* THOUGHT HE WAS SIMPLY A POTENTIAL *CLIENT*, IN WEIRD *CLOTHES.*

"HE'D LEARNED OF CERTAIN *SCIENTIFIC THEORIES* OF MINE-- WELL, OF MEN WORKING *UNDER* ME, ACTUALLY--

"--AND HE WANTED TO SEE FOR *HIMSELF.*

"NATURALLY, I COULD HARDLY *REFUSE.*

"HE *EXAMINED* THE THEORETICAL DIAGRAMS OF *ALTERNATE WORLDS* -- OF THE HYPER-SPACE *NEXUS*--

FIFTH DIMENSION EARTH

NEXUS

EARTH OF ANTASTIC FOUR

EARTH OF "REED RICHARDS' THING!"

"HE TOLD ME WHAT *HIS* SCIENTISTS HAD LEARNED: THAT IF *NUCLEAR BLASTS* COULD BE TRIGGERED ON *ALL THREE WORLDS* MORE OR LESS SIMULTANEOUSLY--

"--THE RESULTANT *ATOMIC ENERGY* WOULD POUR THRU THAT SWIRLING *NEXUS*, LIKE WATER GOING DOWN A DRAIN--

"--AND HE COULD *HARNESS* THAT POWER TO SAVE HIS *OWN* DIMENSION -- WHICH WAS *RUNNING DOWN!*

HE ASKED ME TO *FRONT* FOR HIM--TO BUY *WEAPONS*-- USE THEM TO INSURE *WAR* BETWEEN THOSE THREE WORLDS--!

INCLUDING YOUR *OWN.*

AND YOU *SOLD OUT!*

EVERYBODY SELLS OUT, RICHARDS-- *YOU* KNOW THAT! BUT SOME OF US HAVE *HIGHER PRICES* THAN OTHERS--!

WHAT WAS *YOURS*, DeVOOR? THIRTY PIECES OF *SILVER?*

REED-- *LOOK!*

THE *D-SCANNER* HAS LOCATED *JOHNNY* AND THE OTHER *THING*-- IN *ARKON'S WORLD!*

GREAT, HONEY! LET *ME*--

NO, REED. *I'LL* DO IT--

AFTER ALL, JOHNNY'S *MY* BROTHER-- *MY* FLESH AND BLOOD-- AND I'VE GOT TO--

OHH!

GOOD LORD!

THERE THEY ARE!!

WHOW!

WATCH IT, RICHARDS! HERE COMES ARKON'S GOON SQUAD!

I MAY NOT BE A FULLTIME SUPERHERO LIKE YOU AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR, LAD...

...BUT I THINK I CAN STILL RECOGNIZE A HOSTILE FORCE WHEN I SEE ONE!

FKAT!

PART TWO:

ARKON AT BAY!

OKAY, FRIEND! THEN, LIKE THEY SAY IN THE MOVIES-- IT'S TIME FOR PLAN "8"!

I HATE TO DO THIS-- BUT YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!

FIRE AT THE MONSTER FIRST! FIRE!

STOP BEING SO NOBLE, SON! THE PLAN WAS MY IDEA AS MUCH AS YOURS, REMEMBER?

FZAP!

NOW GET OUT-- WHILE THE GETTING'S GOOD!

ZZ'K!

SLAM

AS FOR ME-- I'VE BEEN HOLED UP IN A LAB THE PAST FEW YEARS, SLAVING OVER A HOT ROBOT...

AND EVEN THE KIND OF MUSCLES I'VE GOT CAN ATROPHY A BIT, THRU LACK OF EXERCISE.

STILL, I'M NOT EXACTLY THE 98-POUND WEAKLING IN THE JOHNNY ATLAS ADS...

ARK!

...SO I OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO HOLD MY OWN...

...OR NOT HOLD IT, AS THE CASE MAY BE!

TU WAK

TH

NUMBER-TWO-REED IS RIGHT! CAN'T LET MYSELF THINK OF ANYTHING BUT MY MISSION.

CAN'T BE SURE BEN CAN DESTROY THAT HYPER-SPACE NEXUS OF ARKON'S, SO I'VE GOT TO DO THE BACK-UP WORK:

NAMELY, TAKE ON ARKON HIMSELF!

NOW, UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, A GUY WITH EGO ENOUGH TO OBLITERATE THREE WORLDS TO FEED ENERGY TO HIS OWN WOULD NATURALLY OCCUPY THE TALLEST STRUCTURE IN SIGHT--

THAT ONE!

WHAT YOU CALL YOUR "KING KONG SYNDROME"!

HMMM...THIS SURE LOOKS LIKE A PALACE-- THRONE ROOM AND ALL!

NO GUARDS AROUND. EITHER THEY'RE ALL OUT BATTLING OL' REED-THING...

...OR ELSE...

RIGHT ON, TORCH...

...IT'S "OR ELSE" TIME!

SZZAK!

YOU INSOLENT, IMPUDENT BRAT!

DID YOU TRULY THINK THE MAGNIFICENT ARKON WOULD BE UNPREPARED FOR SUCH SIMPLISTIC DIVERSIONARY TACTICS?

I, WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF WARFARE TRANSCENDS MERE TACTICS--

--ENCOMPASSES A UNIVERSAL STRATEGY WHICH HAS MADE ME MASTER OF ONE WORLD--

--AND IMMINENT ANNIHILATOR OF THREE MORE!?

ARRHH!

I *CONFESS*, HOWEVER, THAT I UNDERSTAND *YOUR KIND* NO MORE THAN YOU UNDERSTAND *ME*.

I CANNOT *CONCEIVE* OF MEN SUCH AS THE *REED RICHARDSES* OF BOTH WORLDS--

--*OPPOSING* ME, WHEN I COULD OFFER THEM *POWER* BEYOND THEIR WILDEST DREAMS, AS MY *SATRAPS*--MY *VASSALS!*

WITH THEIR GENIUS AND THEIR VALUE TO ME, THEY COULD EVENTUALLY RULE *WORLDS BEYOND WORLDS--!*

YEAH, AND THE *PRICE:* ONE HUMAN *SOUL!*

WE'VE-- GOT *PROVERBS* ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT, ARKON...

YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND *THEM*, EITHER.

SO GO AHEAD AND *WASTE* ME--!

DON'T BE SO *FATALISTIC*, JOHNNY!

OR DON'T THEY *HAVE* LAST-MINUTE CAVALRY CHARGES IN *YOUR* MOVIES?

KR-ASH

UNNH!

REED!

GLAD TO SEE WE'RE FINALLY ON A *FIRST-NAME* BASIS, SON.

I JUDGED ARKON'S POSITION BY HIS *VOICE!* AND *NOW*--

WATCH IT! HE'S GOING FOR HIS *THUNDERBOLTS!*

FLAME ON!

THERE! THAT OUGHT TO *EVEN THINGS UP!*

SSSSS

SO *THIS* IS WHAT IT ALL COMES *DOWN* TO, IN THE END:

A BUNKER IN *BERLIN*... A CELL ON THE ISLAND OF *ELBA*...

...OR A SHATTERED HUNK OF *JUNK* ON A WORLD I CAN'T EVEN *NAME!*

CRA

YOU CAN NEGOTIATE... ACCOMMODATE... FLY ALL THE *PEACE-SHUTTLES* YOU WANT...

BUT, WITHOUT THE SHEER *MUSCLE* TO BACK IT UP-- YOU'RE JUST WHISTLING DOWN A *HOLE!*

AND *ME?* I'M THE *WORST* OF ALL-- TOO *BUSY* PUTTERING AWAY IN MY *IVORY TOWER* TO LOOK UP FROM MY PRECIOUS *TEST TUBES* AND SEE WHAT WAS *GOING ON...*

...TILL IT WAS *TOO LATE...* IN *TWO* WARS!

TWO WARS? I DON'T *GET* YOU, PAL... BUT DON'T BE TOO *HARD* ON YOURSELF!

TOO HARD!? WHEN THE JOHNNY STORM *I* KNEW-- SUE GRIMM'S *BROTHER*-- WAS BLOWN TO PIECES IN *VIET NAM* LAST YEAR...

... WHILE *I* WAS MAKING *WAR-ANDROIDS*, AND NOT WORRYING TOO MUCH ABOUT WHO WAS *PAYING THE BILLS?*

"THE JOHNNY STO--"? YOU *MEAN--?*

UH OH! *SIGNAL* ON THIS GIZMO--!

HOLY JOE! IT'S *SUE--*

--MY SUE, IF I CAN JUDGE FROM THE *F.F. OUTFIT!*

COME *IN*, SIS. YOUR EVER-SCORCHIN' *SIBLING* HERE.

OH, *JOHNNY--* THANK *HEAVEN--*

I-- I'D *PRAYED* YOU'D BE... *ALL RIGHT!*

ONLY, THERE'S STILL *NO* HOPE-- FOR *ANY* OF US-- IF *BEN* DOESN'T DEFEAT THE *GUARDIAN OF THE NEXUS.*

AND HE'S *LOSING*, JOHNNY-- *HE'S LOSING!!*

H-HONESTLY, MRS. RICHARDS-- I'D **HELP** YOU IF I COULD, BUT MY HANDS ARE **TIED!**

IF A **SECOND** LIVING THING-- BESIDES **GAARD**, OF COURSE-- ENTERS THAT SECTOR OF HYPER-SPACE, **ARKON** ARRANGED IT SO THAT THE NEW-COMER WILL **FEED** OFF THE LIFE-FORCE OF THE **FIRST**-- INSTANTLY **KILLING** HIM!

AND YOU WERE A **PARTY** TO THE SCHEME, YOU **FILTHY**--

HOLD IT, SUE--

MAYBE I **AM** GETTING THE GLIMMERINGS OF AN IDEA, AFTER **ALL!**

YEAH? **WHAT**--?

NO TIME TO **EXPLAIN.** ARE **YOU** THERE, MY *DOPPELGANGER* FRIEND?

HERE, RICHARDS!

GOOD! IT SHOULD TAKE ME ONLY A **FEW MINUTES** TO MAKE THE PROPER ADJUSTMENTS ON THIS DEVICE...

I ONLY PRAY THAT BEN CAN **HOLD OUT** THAT LONG!

SO DOES **HE**, *REED. SO DOES* **HE!**

I'VE TRIED **SPEED**-- AND I'VE TRIED PLAIN **MUSCLE.**

ONLY THING LEFT IS TO TRY 'EM BOTH AT **ONCE**--

--HIT 'IM FOR **ALL** **I'M WORTH!** THEN **MAYBE**--

BEN-- **NO!** STAY **AWAY** FROM HIM-- FOR A FEW MORE **MOMENTS!**

LISTEN TO HIM, GRIMM! YOU **MUST**--!

SAY WHA--??

FUNNY WHAT AN INSTANT'S INTER-RUPTION CAN DO TO A FELLA'S **TIMING**...!

Z-ZA-A-A-T!

PART THREE

VICTORY IN HYPER-SPACE!

YOU ARE A *VALIANT FOE*, MAN-MONSTER... ONE I ALMOST FEEL I'VE *BATTLED BEFORE*...

...THOUGH, OF COURSE, THAT IS *IMPOSSIBLE.*

STILL, IT IS MY SWORN DUTY TO *DESTROY* YOU--THE BETTER TO *SAFEGUARD* THE COSMIC *NEXUS!*

LISSEN, PAL-- FOR ALL *I* CARE, YOU CAN PARK YER "COSMIC NEXUS" WHERE THE *SUN NEVER SHINES!*

I GOT A JOB TO DO, *TOO*-- WITH THIS *DISC GIZMO* REED GAVE ME--

--AND ONE OF US HAS DEFINITELY GOTTA GO!

ONCE MORE THE THING CHARGES-- AND ONCE MORE, THE ENTITY CALLED GAARD RUSHES TO MEET HIM--

--READY TO STRIKE HIS FIERCEST, MOST DEADLY BLOW--

-- WHEN SUDDENLY, OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, HE SEES--

A SECOND MONSTER--

--IDENTICAL TO THE FIRST!?

ARKON SWORE THAT SUCH A TWO-PRONGED ATTACK WAS IMPOSSIBLE!

THEN, THERE IS BUT ONE COURSE OPEN TO ME--

MUST HURL MY SCEPTRE AT THE NEWCOMER-- FOR ONLY THUS CAN I STOP HIM IN TIME--

--AND STILL MEET THE ATTACK OF THE FIRST MONSTER!

NO! IT IS BEYOND THE SPECTRUM OF BELIEF!

THE NEWCOMER VANISHES NOW-- AND I AM WEAPON-LESS!

FRANKLY, DUCKS, I WOULDN'T CARE IF YOU HAD YER OWN PET SHERMAN TANK--

--I'M COMIN' THRU!

NOW, BEFORE YOU GET UP-- OR I FALL DOWN--

--I GOTTA MAKE LIKE A COMBO OF WILT THE STILT AN' CATFISH HUNTER!

HOO-HAH! A HOLE IN ONE!

THIS IS LIKE THE WHOLE BLAMED "WIDE WORLD O' SPORTS," ALL ROLLED UP TOGETHER!

HEY! THAT NEXUS-THING IS EXPLODIN'--

NO IT AIN'T! IT'S-- IMPLODIN', I THINK REED'D SAY!

IT'S GETTIN' SMALLER EVERY SECOND-- GOIN'-- GOIN'--

GONE! HOTCHA!

I JUST SAVED THREE WORLDS-- AT LEAST, I THINK THAT'S WHAT I DID!

WHILE I... HAVE FAILED.

YEAH. DOES THAT MEAN WE GOTTA LOCK HORNS AGAIN, PAL?

I DUNNO WHY... BUT SOMEHOW, I'D JUST AS SOON NOT.

THERE IS... NO POINT TO FURTHER BATTLE.

LEAVE ME, PLEASE... TO FACE MY FUTURE EXILE IN PEACE!

YEAH... SURE.

USUALLY, WHEN I FIGHT A GUY, I LEARN HIS ORIGIN, AT LEAST... AND MOST TIMES, I COULD CARE LESS.

DUNNO HOW COME I THINK IT WOULD'VE MATTERED THIS TIME...

MAYBE I'M JUST GETTIN' **SOFT** IN MY OLD AGE...!

PERHAPS, BEN GRIMM...

OR PERHAPS YOU **SENSED,** EVER SO DIMLY, THE DARK **TRUTH** OF GAARD'S ALTER EGO:

IF SO, PERHAPS IT'S BEST YOU **DON'T** KNOW OF **ARKON'S SEARCH,** MONTHS EARLIER, THRU THE SOUTH-EAST ASIAN **JUNGLES** OF AN ALTERNATE EARTH...

...OF ARKON'S **SALVAGING** OF A SHELL-TORN BODY, HIS **RE-STRUCTURING** OF A **HUMAN MIND...**

...A MIND WHICH NOW THINKS ONLY OF ITS OWNER AS SOMEONE CALLED **GAARD...**

...FORGETTING THAT HE HAD **ONCE** BEEN NAMED... **JOHNNY STORM.**

YES, PERHAPS IT'S BEST.

WHILE, BACK IN **OUR** WORLD...

JOHNNY, LAD -- YOU **OKAY?**

YOU **KNOW** IT, LEADER-MAN. HOW'S **BIG BENJY?**

WE LOST **VISUAL CONTACT**-- WHEN THE **NEXUS** IMPLODED! I ONLY **HOPE--**

WORRY **NO MORE,** HONEY. HERE HE **IS!**

BEN! THANK HEAVEN BOTH YOU AND JOHNNY ARE **ALL RIGHT!**

--IF I DON'T GET THESE BLAMED **SKATE-GIZMOS** OFF FAST!

I DON'T **GET** IT! I WUZ JUST GETTIN' THE **HANG** OF 'EM BACK THERE, AN' **NOW--**

YEAH, WELL, **ONE** OF US IS GONNA BUST HIS EVER-LOVIN' **TAIL-BONE--**

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR MR. G!

THERE! BACK ON TERRA FIRMA, AT LAST!

YEAH, YEAH -- SPARE ME THE BIG WORDS, OKAY?

OBVIOUSLY, THEY WERE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR USE IN HYPER-SPACE, WHERE THE FREE FLOW OF PROTONS AND TRACHYONS MUST --

WELL, BEN? AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME HOW I MANAGED TO MATERIALIZE A SECOND "THING" IN HYPER-SPACE, WHEN I'D LEARNED EARLIER IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE?

NAAH! I FIGGER YOU JUST PLUGGED A COUPLE'A FRAMMISTATS TOGETHER AN' BROADCAST AN IMAGE OF MY LOOK-ALIKE, HOLDIN' A PHONY FRISBEE.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY, OLD FRIEND... NOTHING AT ALL.

JUST ONE MORE THING, REED.

YES?

THANKS.

FORGET IT. WE'RE ALL IN THIS THING TOGETHER -- AT LEAST, I HOPE WE STILL ARE...

IF THAT'S A REFERENCE TO MY QUITTING THE F.F. -- OKAY, I'M BACK!

BUT WHAT ABOUT INTER-LOCKING TECHNOLOGIES, UNLIMITED?

I'VE A HUNCH I.T. IS GOING TO FADE QUIETLY AWAY ON THREE WORLDS -- RIGHT, DeVOOR?

I-INDUBITABLY, MR. RICHARDS...!

COOL! 'COURSE, BROTHER ARKON'LL BE MAD AS A HORNET WHEN HE WAKES UP --

...BUT HE'LL JUST HAVE TO LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR HIS WORLD'S ENERGY SUPPLY!

OH, HI, ALICIA. HOW'S LITTLE FRANKLIN?

FINE, JOHNNY... BUT NOT AS LITTLE AS HE ONCE WAS!

HAND HIM OVER, ALICIA. HERE'S SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO SEE YOU!

HIYA, BABY!

OH, BEN -- IS IT REALLY YOU THIS TIME -- NOT SOMEONE WHO JUST SOUNDS LIKE YOU?

C'MERE AN' SAY THAT --!

OHHH -- I GUESS IT REALLY IS YOU --

--AFTER ALL!

NEXT: YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ANYBODY LIKE -- THE CRUSADER! (OR, IF YOU HAVE, WAIT'LL YOU SEE HIM NOW!!)

Cover from *Giant-Size Fantastic Four* #5, May 1975
(reprinting *The Fantastic Four Annual* #5 & *The Fantastic Four* #15)

Cover from *Giant-Size Fantastic Four* #6, October 1975
(reprinting *The Fantastic Four Annual* #1 & 6)

What saw print as *FF #158-159* was originally scheduled for *Giant-Size Fantastic Four* #5. This production photostat shows the story's cover with its original *Giant-Size* trade dress.

Between covers by John Romita, *Marvel Treasury Edition* #2 reprinted stories from *The Fantastic Four* #6, 11, 48-50 & *Annual* #1

2 DEC

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S ISSUE!!

MARVEL TREASURY EDITION™

THE FABULOUS FANTASTIC FOUR™

$1.50
02930

A DELUXE LIMITED EDITION OF
THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-TEAM

MARVEL TREASURY EDITION

It took a lot of nerve to do it! But we weren't kidding. We meant it. When we proudly lettered "The World's Greatest Comic-Book" on the cover of THE FANTASTIC FOUR, we knew the F.F. would have a lot to live up to—and live up to it they did—for 15 long, award-winning years!

But I guess it's not too hard to be the greatest when you start with four dynamite characters like Mr. Fantastic, The Invisible Girl, The Human Torch, and the ever-lovin' bashful blue-eyed Thing!

As a matter of fact, I'll let you in on a little secret. I used to feel guilty telling people that I wrote these stories. Why? Well, mainly because they practically write themselves. All the author has to do is ask "What would happen if—?" You know, like "What would happen if the Thing turned against the other three?" Or, "What would happen if Reed and Sue have a baby? Would it be born with a super power? And if so, what kind of power?" Or, "What would happen if the Torch falls in love and wants to quit the F.F. just when he's needed the most?" Yep, that's the whole bit. Once we've dreamed up the right "What would happen if—?" with characters like ours, the rest is all downhill.

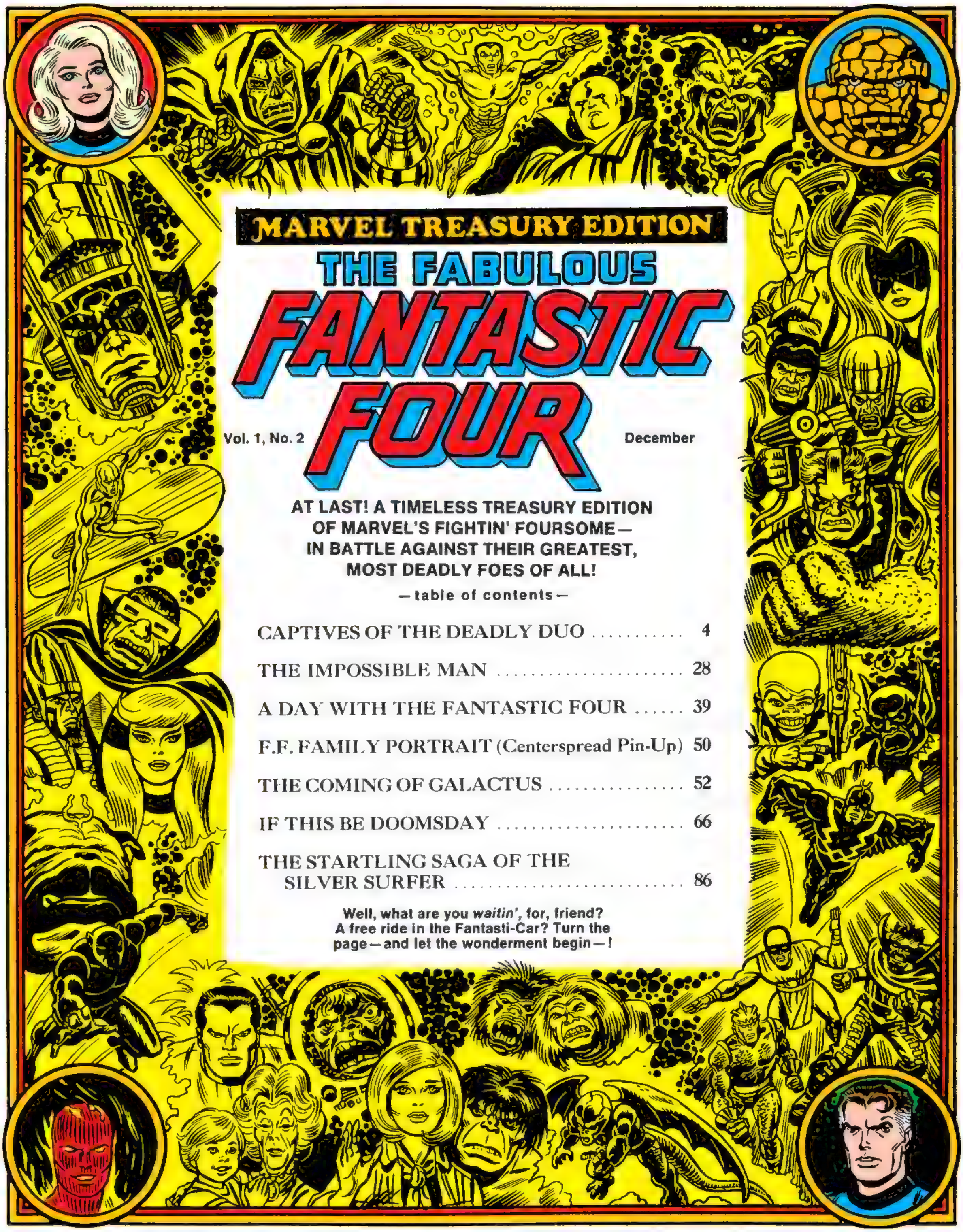
Of course, we've had a little help from the most talented artists and Bullpen staff in the history of comicdom. And, lest you think I'm layin' it on too thick, just look at the track record. Remember, 'twas none other than the fabulous FANTASTIC FOUR that first brought you (to mention just a few) the Galactus trilogy, Doctor Doom, the secret of the Negative Zone, the outasight Inhumans, the wondrous Watcher, and the saga of the Silver Surfer!

And how about the ol' F.F. giving you novel-length stories for the first time in comics, as well as the first baby born to a comic-book hero! And the concept of the first superhero series to be continued month after month! In fact, not only did we continue 'em, but we were the first to introduce rotating guest-stars—stars such as Sub-Mariner, the Hulk, Spider-Man, Daredevil—we could go on and on, but we know you're anxious to get to the best part—the stories themselves!

So the time has come to leave your own little world behind you as you join Stretcho and his sensational super-team in one of the greatest collections of fantasy-filled adventures of all time. As for me, I've got to leave you now—I forgot to lock the door back at the Baxter Building!

Excelsior!

Stan


MARVEL TREASURY EDITION
THE FABULOUS
FANTASTIC FOUR
Vol. 1, No. 2
December
AT LAST! A TIMELESS TREASURY EDITION
OF MARVEL'S FIGHTIN' FOURSOME—
IN BATTLE AGAINST THEIR GREATEST,
MOST DEADLY FOES OF ALL!
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A DAY WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR 39
F.F. FAMILY PORTRAIT (Centerspread Pin-Up) 50
THE COMING OF GALACTUS 52
IF THIS BE DOOMSDAY 66
THE STARTLING SAGA OF THE
SILVER SURFER 86
Well, what are you waitin', for, friend?
A free ride in the Fantasti-Car? Turn the
page—and let the wonderment begin—!

We interrupt this magazine to bring you a FAMILY PORTRAIT of the Fantastic Four (or is it *Five?* Sue still hasn't decided) and their far-out friends and neighbors. Just for the record, this once-in-a-lifetime pic was created by BIG JOHN BUSCEMA and FEARLESS FRANK GIACOIA who've drawn a few F.F. classics of their *own,* to date. And, quite frankly, I kinda figure that's all the intro you need. So, enjoy!

Now, back to our regularly-scheduled mag—!

Four human beings--changed by space-born cosmic rays into something more than merely human.

So was born The Fantastic Four--
and from that moment on, the world would never again be the same.

Marvel Treasury Edition #2 house ad
(from January 1975 titles)

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THE GRANDEST, MOST GIGANTIC ISSUE
of THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!!

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EVERY PAGE A GIANT-SIZED 10" X 14"

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SOUL-SEARING STORIES BY STAN LEE!
ACTION-PACKED ART BY JACK KIRBY!

FEATURING THE fantastic four's MOST FEARSOME FOES:
DOCTOR DOOM!
SUB-MARINER!
GALACTUS!
SILVER SURFER!
NOT TO MENTION THE IRREPRESSIBLY INCREDIBLE IMPOSSIBLE MAN!

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ON SALE SEPT. 17TH

Marvel Treasury Edition #2 house ad
(from January 1975 titles)

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AS MIGHTY MARVEL PRESENTS THE SECOND IN ITS MAMMOTH-SIZED TREASURY EDITIONS--FEATURING THE STARS OF "THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAG-AZINE"! HERE'S WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR FEW PALTRY SHECKLES, MARVELITE:
100 DOUBLE-SIZE PAGES OF THE F.F.'s GREATEST ADVENTURES!
SOUL-SEARING STORIES BY STAN LEE!
ACTION-PACKED ART BY JACK KIRBY!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S MOST FAMOUS FOES! DOCTOR DOOM! SUB-MARINER! GALACTUS! SILVER SURFER!
ALL THIS AND MORE WILL BE YOURS, FAITHFUL ONE, WHEN YOU GRAB THIS CATACLYSMIC ISSUE--WHEREVER MAG-AZINES ARE DISPLAYED! ON SALE SEPT. 17
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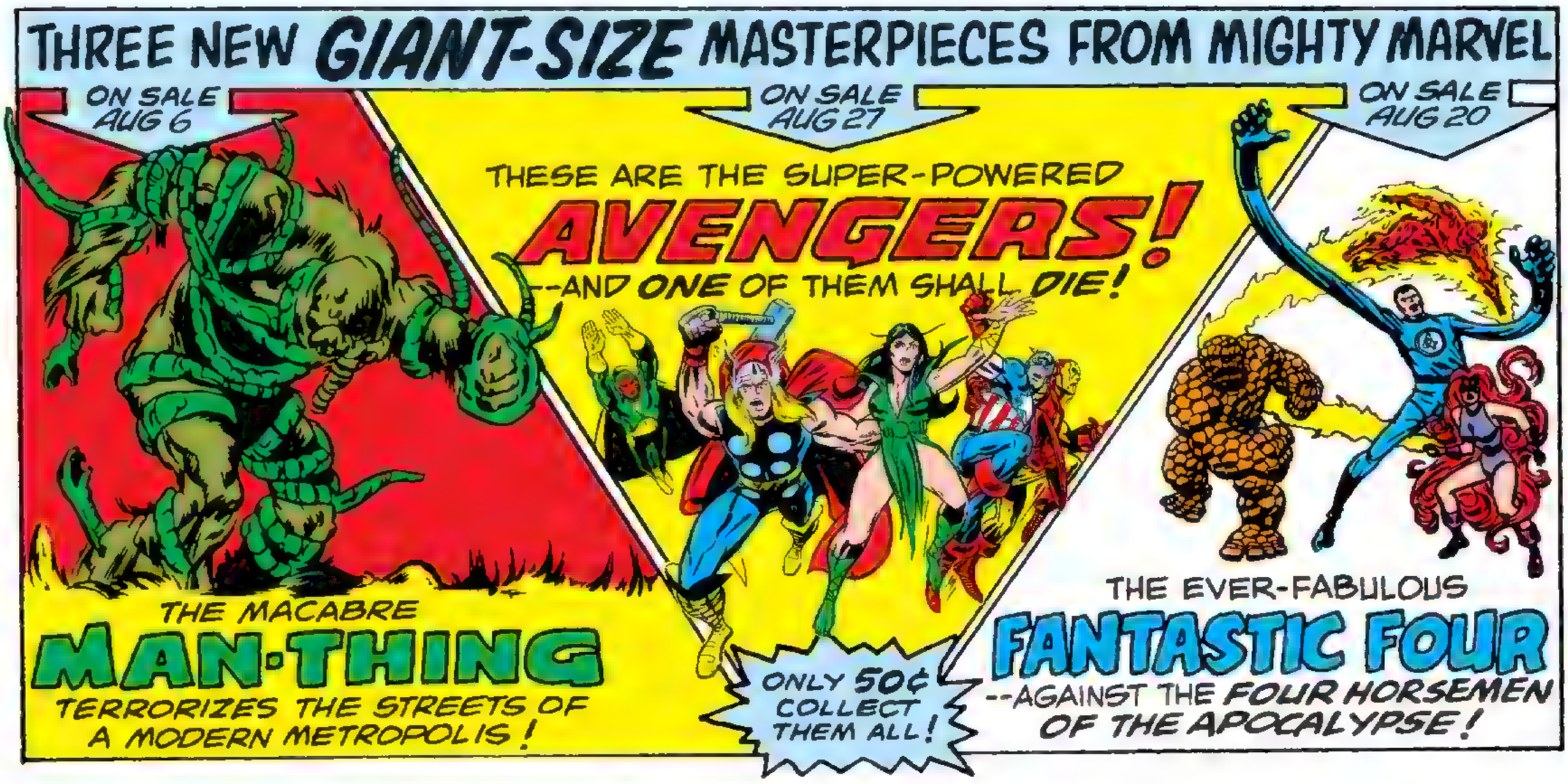
Giant-Size Fantastic Four #3,
Giant-Size Avengers #2 & *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #2 house ad
(from November 1974 titles)


THREE NEW GIANT-SIZE MASTERPIECES FROM MIGHTY MARVEL
ON SALE AUG 6
ON SALE AUG 27
ON SALE AUG 20
THESE ARE THE SUPER-POWERED AVENGERS!
--AND ONE OF THEM SHALL DIE!
THE MACABRE MAN-THING TERRORIZES THE STREETS OF A MODERN METROPOLIS!
ONLY 50¢ COLLECT THEM ALL!
THE EVER-FABULOUS FANTASTIC FOUR
--AGAINST THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE!

BIOGRAPHIES

ROY THOMAS

Along with fellow fan Jerry Bails, Roy Thomas developed the first known organized comic fandom in the pages of *Alter Ego*, a self-published fanzine. Leaving his teaching position in 1965, Roy took his deep knowledge of comics characters and their history and moved to New York City, accepting a job under DC Comics editor Mort Weisinger. His stay lasted little over a week before he opted for a position at Marvel, where under Stan Lee, his duties quickly matured from proofreading to more serious work as an editorial assistant and writer.

Titles as disparate as *Modeling With Millie*, *Kid Colt* and *Sgt. Fury* were written under his auspices before he was able to fulfill his desire to write super-hero stories on Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense* #73 and a pair of Dr. Strange stories for *Strange Tales*.

Stan must have liked what he was reading, because after this seeming trial period, Roy "The Boy" (as he was called in credits) was given both *Sgt. Fury* and *The X-Men*. Along with artist Werner Roth, Thomas took the X-Men on adventures around the world and told the characters' pre-X-Men origins. In addition to introducing Banshee, Sunfire and Havok, Thomas' X-Men credits also include his watershed collaboration with artist Neal Adams.

Proving his mettle on *X-Men* led him to *The Avengers*, and it was with this team that Roy really started crafting his legacy. Across 70 consecutive issues of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, he became perhaps the title's definitive writer, introducing characters such as the Vision and penning classic sagas including the "Kree/Skrull War." Before the '60s ended, Thomas chalked up noteworthy runs as writer of *Doctor Strange*, *Sub-Mariner*, *Captain Marvel* and more.

In the '70s, Thomas' influence at Marvel widened to include the first adaptation of Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Barbarian,* a reinvention of Adam Warlock, and a new super-team, The Defenders. By 1972 Roy was selected to succeed Stan Lee as editor in chief. His tenure as EIC lasted for over two years before he returned to his writer/editor role on *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, *Savage Sword of Conan*, *What If...?* and *The Invaders*.

In 1980, he left the House of Ideas for DC to pursue a lifelong dream by reviving the Justice Society of America in the pages of *All-Star Squadron*. He wrote many more comics for DC and Marvel over the next two decades and is still active today, writing comics, historical studies, adaptations of classic novels and publishing his award-winning *Alter Ego*. Thomas' career contributions were acknowledged with his induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame's 2011 class. He lives in South Carolina with his wife and collaborator, Dann, and an amazing menagerie of animals that must make the neighbors nervous.

RICH BUCKLER

Rich Buckler, along with John Buscema and George Pérez, helped define the '70s era of Marvel's flagship title, *Fantastic Four*. His dynamic style and muscular figurework carried on the tradition set by Jack Kirby. Buckler's first published artwork was a backup in King Feature's 1967 *Flash Gordon* #10, and in 1970 he landed work on Warren's *Eerie* and *Creepy* horror magazines. After illustrating a few backup stories at DC Comics, he turned to Marvel for his first feature work. By 1973, he was turned loose on *Fantastic Four* and other Marvel ongoing series like *Jungle Action* (featuring Black Panther) and *Astonishing Tales*, in which he and writer Doug Moench launched Deathlok the Demolisher. The post-apocalyptic story of Col. Luther Manning, their run on "Deathlok" was a defining vision of a future gone wrong. Its influence and themes of military rule, reanimation and killer cyborgs would be reflected in films from *The Terminator* to *RoboCop*. After a time with DC, where he teamed with Roy Thomas on *All-Star Squadron*, Buckler returned to Marvel for work on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *New Mutants* and a return engagement with *Fantastic Four* in the late '90s when he collaborated with writers such as Steve Englehart and Walt Simonson. He has a thriving career outside comics as a surrealist painter.

GERRY CONWAY

In 1969, 16-year-old Gerry Conway was shopping short stories to DC and Marvel for their horror anthology books. By 1976, Conway had worked his way up to Marvel's editor in chief. In between, he logged highlight after highlight as writer for both companies.

After establishing a pedigree with horror short stories, Conway quickly became the regular writer of *Daredevil*, *Sub Mariner* and *Iron Man*. He also began runs on *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Thor*, picking up both titles from none other than Stan Lee. He scripted both for nearly 50 issues, writing controversial and classic tales including "The Death of Gwen Stacy," the first appearance of the Punisher, and the introduction of Harry Osborn as the Green Goblin. Cueing off his early interest in horror stories, Conway took advantage of Marvel's burgeoning line of horror comics, launching *Werewolf By Night* and *Man-Thing*, as well as writing the first issue of *Tomb of Dracula*.

In 1976, he was handed the top job at Marvel before transitioning to DC Comics. One of his first big assignments was writing the script for one of the first inter-company crossovers, *Superman vs. The Amazing Spider-Man*. Shortly thereafter, he began a long tenure on prime DC titles like *Superboy & The Legion of Super-Heroes*, *World's Finest* and *Wonder Woman*. He also introduced Firestorm with Al Milgrom in 1978, scribing all five issues of the short-lived '70s incarnation.

As the '80s dawned, he started a long run writing both key Batman titles, *Detective Comics* and *Batman*, and continued his run on *Justice League of America*, a stint that began in earnest in 1978 and would end with the dismantling of the infamous JLA Detroit in 1986. During this era, he also revived Firestorm with artist Pat Broderick; this time the title found traction and Conway wrote the first 53 issues. A return to Marvel in the late '80s saw Conway tackling two of the three Spider-Man titles: *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Web of Spider-Man*.

During this period, Conway was asserting himself as a writer

in film and television. His early '80s screenplay collaborations with Roy Thomas resulted in the animated film *Fire and Ice* and barbarian sequel *Conan the Destroyer*. By the late '80s, his opportunities in television writing had expanded, and he left comics to pursue writing and producing for *Matlock*, *Father Dowling Mysteries*, *Diagnosis: Murder* and *Law & Order*.

Today, Conway continues writing and producing for television and has recently returned to script the occasional comic. He resides in California with his wife and their daughter.

LEN WEIN

Len Wein's career is highlighted by successes from Swamp Thing to the "All-New, All-Different" X-Men, but few fans know that the award-winning writer and editor started out as a comic-book artist.

As a teenager, Wein was tied to the hip with fellow fanzine writer Marv Wolfman, regularly skipping school to tour the DC Comics offices. After building a rapport with artists and execs like Dick Giordano, Carmine Infantino and Joe Orlando, Wein was able to credibly pitch to the editors. Though his artwork was politely passed upon, a script for *House of Mystery* was accepted and a career as a writer was born. Len attacked his new occupation with gusto, writing for DC, Marvel, Gold Key and Skywald, on everything from Western to horror, and licensed properties from Hot Wheels to Star Trek.

Although his desired career as an artist didn't quite pan out, it did give Wein insight into his collaborator's creative process and helped him garner acclaim as a writer that was "easy to draw." After super-hero work in the early '70s (Daredevil, Superman, Flash), he and artist Bernie Wrightson launched horror mainstay Swamp Thing in the pages of *House of Secrets* #92. Other notable achievements from his tenure at DC include a run on *Justice League of America* and the debut of the Human Target.

Hopping over to Marvel in 1974, where he followed Roy Thomas as editor in chief, Wein scripted several series, including *Incredible Hulk*, where he and artist Herb Trimpe introduced one of comics' most famous characters—Wolverine. That wasn't the end of his mutant milestones, as with artist Dave Cockrum he revived the dormant X-Men property with a new international cast. Its cadre of characters, including Storm, Nightcrawler and Colossus would shortly turn into comics' biggest phenomenon.

Returning to DC, Wein helped spur a creative revival at the company, editing *New Teen Titans*, *Camelot 3000* and *Swamp Thing*, which gave writer Alan Moore his American debut; shortly thereafter, Wein would preside over Moore and Dave Gibbon's groundbreaking *Watchmen*. Since then, Wein's credits in comics, animation and television writing have been numerous and well received as witnessed by his 2008 induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

BOB BROWN

An artist with a career reaching back to comics' Golden Age, Bob Brown has the respect of many longtime comic fans and fellow artists, with due consideration for being a sturdy, reliable craftsman who always delivered the goods. In the 1950s Brown freelanced across the industry on Western, spy, war, horror and romance titles. His most notable Atlas/Marvel work of the period was the 1955 debut of the original Rawhide Kid. At DC, he helped introduce Space Ranger in *Showcase* #15 (July 1958) and drew every one of the character's stories until its end in *Mystery In Space* in 1965. He also picked up the torch on DC's *Challengers of the Unknown* after Jack Kirby exited the series and turned in a run just as remarkable for its craft and consistency. In the 1970s his extended runs on *The Avengers* and *Daredevil* included the blockbuster Avengers/Defenders War and the first appearance of Daredevil's nemesis Bullseye. Besides these titles, you will find Bob Brown's name on dozens of stories in nearly every genre known to comics, a true everyman in the medium. While employed as an artist for both Marvel and DC, Brown died in 1977.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

CHRIS CLAREMONT

It is hard to remember a time when the word "mutant" didn't correspond with the largest and most ardently followed franchise in comics, but in the mid-'70s the X-Men were naught but a forgotten team of misfits. Chris Claremont and his collaborators took this moribund property and issue by issue transformed it into a phenomenon now known the world over.

Claremont began his career in comics in the early '70s pitching in on issues of *Avengers*, *Daredevil* and *Incredible Hulk*, while also delivering several text stories to Marvel's black-and-white magazines. His first regular writing gig was *War Is Hell*, a "weird war" title that came to a close just as his run on *X-Men*

and *Iron Fist* began. *Iron Fist*, which rolled out of the pages of *Marvel Premiere*, was done in concert with artist John Byrne, forming a key partnership that would pay big dividends later. Other high-profile projects from Claremont's first full decade in comics included *Marvel Preview*'s Starlord, *Ms. Marvel*, *Marvel Team-Up* (again with Byrne) and *John Carter: Warlord of Mars*.

But it was in the pages of *X-Men* where Claremont would change comics history. In tandem with artists Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, Claremont helped build a cornerstone franchise for Marvel. After writer Len Wein launched the newly updated series in 1975 with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, Claremont was tasked with guiding the new adventures of the mutant misfits, and he did so by crafting layered stories that balanced crisp dialogue with high-octane action. Claremont placed a premium on characterization, a lofty goal in a team book with many players, but he did so deftly enough to spin a wide-ranging tapestry of characters, each of whom became fan favorites.

Leading breathless fans down the path of classics including "The Dark Phoenix Saga," "Days of Future Past," and *God Loves, Man Kills*, he helped build such an intense loyalty that it only made sense to spin-off the X-Men's success into new books. The first such spin-off was *The New Mutants*. Later in the decade, Claremont launched *Excalibur* with Alan Davis and established a regular series for Wolverine with John Buscema.

In 1990, he launched a new sister title for the main team of mutants with Jim Lee; *X-Men* #1 premiered to numbers that made it the highest-selling comic ever. After a long break from the company, Claremont returned to Marvel in 2000, and over the next ten years wrote the novelization of Bryan Singer's X-Men film, took on the Fantastic Four, and charted the adventures of Marvel's mutants across a variety of titles.

TONY ISABELLA

Like many writers who emerged in the early '70s, Tony Isabella's first "official" writing for Marvel was as a fan in its letter pages. His comprehensive knowledge of the Marvel Universe and its characters, combined with his gift for writing, made him a natural for a job as an editorial assistant in 1972. Eventually working his way up to a job as a staff writer, Isabella carved out a niche in Marvel's horror titles with "It! The Living Colossus" in the pages of *Astonishing Tales*, the Living Mummy in *Supernatural Thrillers* and scribing a variety of stories across the black-and-white magazines line, including *Dracula Lives!*, *Tales of the Zombie*, *Vampire Tales* and *Monsters Unleashed*.

Isabella's most familiar contributions to Marvel readers were in a long run of *Ghost Rider* stories and the introduction of Tigra to Marvel's stable of female heroines. His twelve-issue spin with the demonic alter ego of Johnny Blaze included a controversial tale featuring Ghost Rider's redemption with Jesus Christ, a milestone moment of the era. And after Tigra's first appearance, Isabella led her to a team-up with Thing in *Marvel Two-In-One*, and ongoing adventures in *Marvel Chillers*.

His other credits included Iron Fist in *Marvel Premiere*, *Hero for Hire/Power Man* and a fill-in story that ran over two issues of *Avengers*, featuring the Assassin's unrelenting pursuit of Earth's Mightiest Heroes. Isabella also wrote the first seven issues of *The Champions*, the '70s super-hero team featuring Hercules, Black Widow, Ghost Rider, Angel and Iceman.

At DC Isabella introduced Black Lightning and revamped Hawkman and Hawkgirl in the early '80s. Since then, Isabella has been writing for indie publishers, running his own comic store and writing an online column for *Comic Buyer's Guide* called Tony's Tips.

MARV WOLFMAN

Marv Wolfman's stints writing for movies, television, animation and novels mark him as a varied and highly regarded talent, but it is his comic book writing where he first gained prestige as one of the industry's most acclaimed talents.

His first forays into the comic industry were short tenures as editor and writer for both Warren Publishing and DC Comics, but it was after a move to Marvel in 1972 that his career began to blossom. One of his earliest hits was *Tomb of Dracula*, Marvel's adaptation of the classic Bram Stoker vampire. It was in the pages of *Tomb of Dracula* that Wolfman and Gene Colan unveiled the character Blade, the vampire hunter. This earthly hero was one of the earliest black heroes in comics and was introduced to further affirm the realism he sought to inject into the Dracula comic.

After editing Marvel's black-and-white magazines, he quickly stepped up the ladder to follow Len Wein as editor in chief. Wolfman had noted that the readership, who like himself had become loyal fans in their adolescence, felt it was important to have the stories Marvel produced "grow up" along with them. His editorial duties, however, stole time from his writing, so in 1976 he stepped down and took on writing full-time.

As writer of *Daredevil*, his two-year run preceded the Frank Miller era and included the introduction of Bullseye, now the most innovative and fearsome of Daredevil's rogues' gallery. Other work from his prolific Marvel tenure in the late '70s included lengthy runs on Marvel's two flagship titles: *The Amazing Spider-Man* (including the debut of the Black Cat) and *Fantastic Four* as well runs on *Nova*, *Doctor Strange* and *Thor*.

Moving to DC, he teamed with artist George Pérez and ushered in *New Teen Titans*. Most of the Titans came to life under his auspices, including Cyborg, Nightwing, Starfire, and Raven, as well as their nemesis Deathstroke. Next, Wolfman and Pérez delivered the epochal *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, condensing DC's complex 50 year history into a single, shared universe.

Taking a lengthy sabbatical from writing comics, Wolfman moved to writing for animation shows including *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*, later becoming comics editor for *Disney Adventures Magazine*. He continues to write for DC Comics and more recently, has penned the nonfiction *Homeland, the Illustrated History of the State of Israel*. In 2011 Marv was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

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THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-8

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-5
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE MARVEL COMICS VOLS. 1-7
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
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MEDUSA! THIS THING'S DRAININ' THE LIFE OUT OF US!
YOU CAN'T LEAVE US NOW! NOT NOW!
BUT I MUST, BEN GRIMM--EVEN IF IT MEANS--YOUR DEATHS!
WORLD OF MADNESS--WORLD OF DOOM!

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WE CAN'T STOP HIM FROM EXPLODING--AND WHEN MANIKIMO DIES A UNIVERSE DIES WITH HIM!
THE MENACE OF MANIKIMO THE NUCLEAR MAN!
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ALL-OUT ACTION--AS ONLY MIGHTY MARVEL CAN PRESENT IT!

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ALL THIS...AND THE SILVER SURFER TOO!

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CARNAGE AT CASTLE LATVERIA!

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THE THING FIGHTS ALONE!

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THE SHOCKER YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE! TWO THINGS ARE DEADLIER THAN ONE!
NOTHING MUST STOP US NOW! WE'RE COMING THRU!!
OR ELSE THEY'LL CARRY US OUT--FEET FIRST!
THEN THAT'S JUST WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO!

PRINTED IN CHINA